

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188		
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE November 2010		2. REPORT TYPE Technical		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) November 2010	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Special Operations Forces Language and Culture Needs Assessment: Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER USZA22-02-D-0015		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S) SWA Consulting Inc			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) SWA Consulting Inc 311 S. Harrington St. Suite 200 Raleigh, NC 27603 SWA was a subcontractor to Gemini Industries, Inc. under Contract # USZA22-02-D-0015			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER 2010011016		
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Special Operations Forces Culture and Language Office HQ USSOCOM Attn: SOKL-J7—SOFLO 7701 Tampa Point Blvd MacDill AFB, FL 33621-5323			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) SOFLO		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT A. Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT This report examined perceptions of the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) from the Special Operations Forces (SOF) community so that feedback can be used to improve the OPI, testing conditions, and the match between language testing, language training, and incentive programs. Results from this study indicated that most SOF operators and leaders who participated in the study had neutral to favorable perceptions of the OPI in terms of its job-relatedness and accuracy. Also, those operators and leaders who supported the testing standard change (i.e., the switch from the Defense Language Proficiency Test to the OPI) agreed more strongly that the OPI accurately assesses and relates to what SOF operators do on missions. However, many SOF operators and leaders agreed that the OPI needed to cover more mission-specific tasks. Future directions with the use of the OPI in the SOF community and general recommendations based on respondent comments are also discussed.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Oral Proficiency Interview, OPI, needs assessment, language testing, language proficiency					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 56	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Surface, Eric A.
a. REPORT U	b. ABSTRACT U	c. THIS PAGE U			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) 919-480-2751



Special Operations Forces Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project: Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)



NOVEMBER 2010

APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE;

DISTRIBUTION UNLIMITED

SPONSORED BY: SOFLO, USSOCOM

RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY: SWA CONSULTING INC.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Language proficiency standards and testing should align with the skills required for mission success. Special Operations Forces (SOF) operators and leaders report primarily using speaking and listening skills, as compared to reading and writing skills, when deployed on missions [*Inside AOR Use of Language*, Technical Report (#2010011010), *Outside AOR Use of Language*, Technical Report (#2010011011)]. Furthermore, the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) identified speaking as “the most critical SOF language modality” since operators and leaders “must be able to establish rapport and relations with allies and partners, [which is] done primarily through conversational speaking” [USSOCOM M 350-8, 2009, p. 3]. This recognition of the importance of speaking proficiency for mission success resulted in an USSOCOM standard change from reading/listening proficiency assessed with the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) to listening/speaking proficiency assessed with the two-skill Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). Knowledge of and support for the standard change needs to be assessed to determine SOF operator and leader support or opposition. In addition, examining reactions to the standard change can identify gaps in communicating the change and aligning the standard with training and incentive programs.

Since language proficiency testing should align with the modality used on missions, the USSOCOM identified the OPI, a measure of speaking and participatory listening proficiency, as the preferred test for assessing an operator’s language proficiency (USSOCOM M 350-8, 2009). This report evaluates SOF operator and leader reactions to the standard change and OPI so that SOF leadership, CLPMs, unit leaders, testing center administrators, and test developers can use the SOF operator and leader feedback to improve the OPI, OPI testing conditions, and the match between SOF operator language testing, language training, and incentive programs.

Reactions to the Standard Change

The standard change has received support from many SOF operators (45%, $n = 468$) and leaders (54%, $n = 434$). However, some SOF operators and leaders reported neutral [SOF operators (45%, $n = 464$), SOF leaders (37%, $n = 296$)] and opposing [SOF operators (10%, $n = 107$), SOF leaders (9%, $n = 70$)] reactions to the standard change. SOF operator and leader comments suggested three reasons for these neutral and opposing opinions:

- First, many respondents (Supported: $n = 50$, Neutral: $n = 14$, Opposed: $n = 35$) commented that reading is still an important skill for mission success and should be included in language testing. This suggests that a reading test may be necessary for some SOF operators.
- Second, some were concerned that SOF operator language training (Supported: $n = 17$, Neutral: $n = 5$, Opposed: $n = 10$) and language proficiency incentive programs (Supported: $n = 17$, Neutral: $n = 13$, Opposed: $n = 10$) had not been updated to align with OPI testing, so SOF operators would not be prepared for OPI testing nor would they be motivated to take it. Thus, ensuring SOF operators are prepared for the OPI and paid for OPI scores at the appropriate levels should be addressed within all components. Communicating how the OPI is used to pay Foreign Language

Proficiency Bonus – currently and as policy changes – will be key to addressing this concern for SOF personnel.

- Third, unfamiliarity with the change (Supported: $n = 20$, Neutral: $n = 35$, Opposed: $n = 1$) and/or inexperience with OPI testing, particularly two-skill OPI testing, (Supported: $n = 19$, Neutral: $n = 19$, Opposed: $n = 4$) were mentioned as reasons why SOF operators and leaders were undecided about the standard change. This suggests that information about the standard change and associated testing should be widely disseminated.

OPI Testing Background

Overall, 44% ($n = 505$) of SOF operators reported having taken an official OPI, and 77% ($n = 448$) of these SOF operators reported not encountering any problems during testing. For those who experienced problems, the most commonly reported problems were disruptions while testing, delays/problems receiving score feedback, and technical difficulties, such as problems hearing the tester on the phone. Disruptions may suggest a lack of sufficient control and/or standardization in the testing environments or that facilities are not structured for OPI testing. This should be investigated. These findings suggest the OPI often functions properly, but the occasional problems that do arise should be addressed as they are likely to become more frequent as OPI testing increases with the standard change and strains on OPI testing resources.

OPI Perceptions

For the SOF operators who have taken an OPI (44%, $n = 505$) and the SOF leaders who were familiar with it and could comment on their operators' ratings (12%, $n = 88$), most had neutral or favorable perceptions of the OPI in terms of its job-relatedness and accuracy. Moreover, SOF operators and leaders who supported the standard change agreed more strongly that the OPI accurately assesses and relates to what SOF operators do on missions. However, many SOF operators and leaders agreed that there are language tasks SOF operators need to perform not covered by the OPI, suggesting it needs to cover more mission-specific tasks. Although many SOF operators and leaders believe the OPI relates to what SOF operators do on the job and accurately assesses their ability to use the language while deployed, some also believe it does not cover all the skills SOF operators need for mission success. Since the OPI is a measure of functional speaking proficiency (and participatory listening proficiency in the case of the two-skill OPI), more mission-related prompts and role plays could be introduced into the OPI without compromising the assessment of proficiency tasks. However, this would require a modification of the assessment and retraining of the OPI testers.

In addition to their favorable OPI perceptions, 68% of SOF leaders reported they pay attention to SOF operator OPI ratings, 56% indicated that SOF operator OPI ratings are *important* or *very important*, and 45% *often* or *very often* encourage SOF operators to study and do well on the OPI. It appears that while some SOF leaders have shifted their focus to OPI testing, many are still transitioning to the focus on speaking proficiency and OPI testing. This may be a result of unfamiliarity with the standard change on the part of SOF leaders. However, these results should be interpreted with caution because of the small number of SOF leaders who responded to these items. As OPI testing continues to increase, the amount

of attention and importance SOF leaders place on OPI testing and scores should be monitored to see if they also increase.

See Appendix A for details the *2009 SOF LCNA Project*. For questions or more information about the SOFLO and this project, please contact Mr. Jack Donnelly (john.donnelly@socom.mil). For specific questions related to data collection or reports associated with this project, please contact Dr. Eric A. Surface (esurface@swa-consulting.com) or Dr. Reanna Poncheri Harman (rpharman@swa-consulting.com) with SWA Consulting Inc.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I: REPORT AND PROJECT OVERVIEW	6
SECTION II: REACTIONS TO THE STANDARD CHANGE.....	8
SECTION III: SOF OPERATOR OPI TESTING BACKGROUND	14
SECTION IV: OPI TESTING PERCEPTIONS.....	19
SECTION V: CONCLUSIONS	24
REFERENCES.....	26
ABOUT SWA CONSULTING INC.	27
APPENDIX A: ABOUT THE LCNA PROJECT	28
APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY	30
APPENDIX C: REACTIONS TO THE STANDARD CHANGE	33
APPENDIX D: SOF OPERATOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE OPI.....	34
APPENDIX E: SOF LEADER PERCEPTIONS OF THE OPI	37
APPENDIX F: MI LINGUISTS AND 09L SURVEY RESPONSES	40
APPENDIX G: CURRENTLY IN THE TRAINING PIPELINE RESPONSES	42
APPENDIX H: SOF OPERATOR OPI PERCEPTIONS BY STANDARD CHANGE SUPPORT .	44
APPENDIX I: SOF LEADER OPI PERCEPTIONS BY STANDARD CHANGE SUPPORT	47
APPENDIX J: COMMENT CODE DEFINITIONS	50

SECTION I: REPORT AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) Report Purpose

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) identified speaking proficiency as the language skill most important to mission success (USSOCOM M 350-8, 2009). Input from Special Operations Forces (SOF) operators and leaders in the field confirm the importance of speaking proficiency for mission success and job performance [(*Inside AOR Use of Language*, Technical Report (#2010011010)), (*Outside AOR Use of Language*, Technical Report (#2010011011))]. To align training and testing with the mission-related proficiency requirements, USSOCOM changed the testing standard from reading/listening assessed with the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) to listening/speaking proficiency assessed with the two-skill Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). The purpose of this report is to assess support for the standard change and perceptions of the new test of record, the OPI.

The standard change occurred in 2009. The SOF community's support for the standard change should be assessed to identify the advantages and disadvantages associated with a focus on speaking proficiency, as well as the acceptance of the change. This information can also detect areas where the standard change has not been applied, such as where language training or incentive programs have not been updated.

As the SOF community transitions toward the OPI, their experiences with and perceptions of the test need to be examined since identifying any potential issues now allows them to be addressed prior to more widespread OPI testing. As demand for OPI testing increases as a result of the standard change, logistical and other problems with the OPI testing process – if they exist - will only be exacerbated. First, examining experiences of SOF personnel identifies if problems occur with the OPI delivery, as negative testing experiences could hinder USSOCOM's efforts to promote speaking proficiency. SOF operators and leaders who have negative testing experiences may be less likely to take the test seriously than those who have positive testing experiences. Second, if problems are occurring, the nature of the issues must be identified so corrective action can be taken. Third, perceptions of an assessment's accuracy and job-relatedness can influence motivation and attitudes toward the test (Chan, Schmitt, Jennings, Clause, & Delbridge, 1998; Gilliland 1993; Smither, Millsap, Stoffey, Reilly, & Pearlman, 1996). SOF operator and leader perceptions of the OPI could impact test performance, with those who believe the OPI is inaccurate and not job-related being less motivated to do well (or to encourage others to do well) on the test. Finally, by asking test users, factors and issues not anticipated by test developers and policymakers are often discovered. Collecting this type of user feedback should be part of a test development and maintenance plan.

This report presents SOF operator and leader perspectives on the standard change and SOF operator OPI testing. Section I provides an overview of this report and the *SOF Language and Culture Needs Assessment (LCNA) Project*. Section II provides reactions to the standard change. Section III describes SOF operator OPI testing backgrounds. Sections IV reports SOF operator and leader OPI testing perceptions. Section V provides conclusions based on Sections II through IV. Appendix A details the *2009 SOF LCNA Project*, and Appendix B discusses the report methodology, including participants,

measures, and analyses. Appendices C through E provide additional results by component. Appendix F provides MI linguists and 09L responses and Appendix G provides responses for respondents currently in the training pipeline. Appendices H and I present additional OPI perception comparisons for SOF operators and leaders. Appendix J defines all comment codes used in the report.

LCNA Project Purpose

The Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) commissioned the *2009 SOF LCNA Project* to gain insights on language and culture capability and issues across the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). The goal of this organizational-level needs assessment is to inform strategy and policy to ensure SOF personnel have the language and culture skills needed to conduct their missions effectively. Data were collected between March and November 2009 from personnel in the SOF community, including operators and leaders. Findings, gathered via focus groups and a web-based survey, will be presented in a series of reports divided into three tiers. The specific reports in each of these tiers will be determined and contracted by the SOFLO. *Tier I* reports focus on specific, limited issues (e.g., *Inside AOR Use of Language*). *Tier II* reports integrate and present the most important findings across related *Tier I* reports (e.g., *Use of Language and Culture on Deployment*) while including additional data and analysis on the topic. One *Tier III* report presents the most important findings, implications, and recommendations across all topics explored in this project. The remaining *Tier III* reports present findings for specific SOF organizations [e.g., Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), Special Forces (SF) Command]. Two foundational reports document the methodology and participants associated with this project. Report topics are determined by the SOFLO and are subject to change.

Relationship of Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) to the LCNA Project

Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) is a *Tier I* report that will be integrated with two other *Tier I* reports, *Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT)* and *DLAB (Defense Language Aptitude Battery): Perspectives from the Field*, into a *Tier II* report, *Testing/Metrics* (see Appendix A for the initially planned report structure). The final reports produced will be determined by the SOFLO.

SECTION II: REACTIONS TO THE STANDARD CHANGE

In 2009, USSOCOM announced a standard change from reading/listening assessed with the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) to listening/speaking assessed with the two-skill Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). It is important to examine SOF operator and leader¹ reactions to this change to determine how many support or oppose it. This section describes the degree to which SOF operators and leaders support the standard change, and any specific feedback they have related to it.

Research Questions

This section addresses the following questions:

- How did SOF operators and leaders react to the standard change?
- How do SOF operator and leader reactions compare?

Main Findings

Overall, many SOF operators (45%, $n = 468$) and leaders (54%, $n = 434$) supported the standard change (SOF leaders reported significantly greater support than SOF operators) and very few opposed it. Respondents supporting the standard change indicated that speaking and listening are the most important modalities for SOF operators, and they supported the focus on skills used on deployment. However, many operators (45%, $n = 464$) and leaders (37%, $n = 296$) were neutral about their reaction to the standard change. Feedback suggests that this neutrality stems from: (1) unawareness of the standard change ($n = 35$), (2) unfamiliarity with the two-skill OPI ($n = 19$), and (3) belief that reading proficiency should also be tested ($n = 14$). In addition to also believing that reading proficiency should be tested ($n = 35$), respondents who opposed the standard change also wanted a financial incentive for OPI testing ($n = 10$) and training to match the new testing format ($n = 10$). Given that the standard changed in the same year the survey was administered, support from both SOF operators and leaders is encouraging. Even the large number of SOF operators and leaders undecided about the standard change is to be expected since it is still relatively new information. There were no significant differences found across SOF components.² Results suggest that more information dissemination of the standard change and associated testing policy is needed.

Detailed Findings

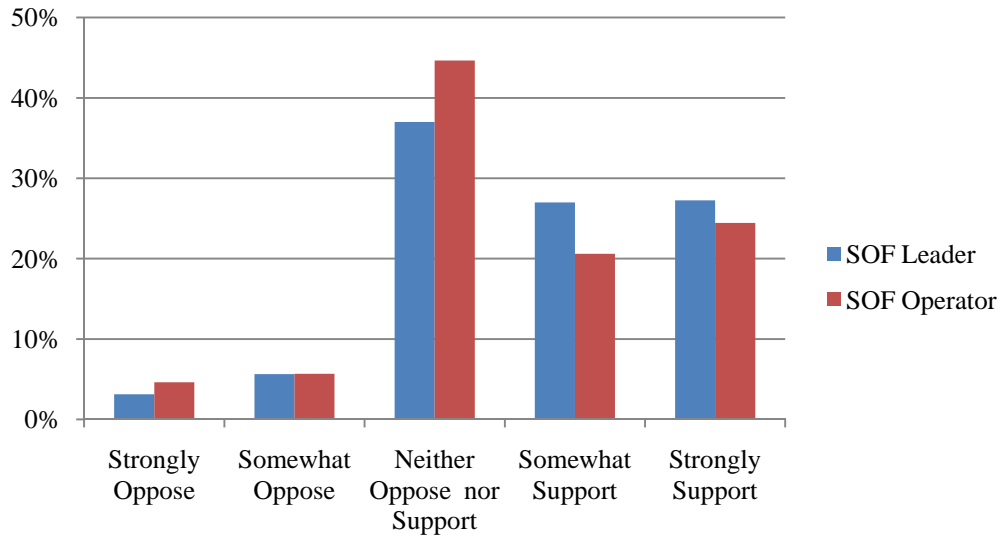
Overall, findings are positive since there is little opposition from both SOF operators (10%, $n = 107$) and leaders (9%, $n = 70$) to the USSOCOM's standard change. Most SOF operators and leaders reported neutrality (45%, $n = 464$ and 37%, $n = 296$, respectively) or support (45%, $n = 468$ and 54%, $n = 434$, respectively) for the change. More SOF operators than SOF leaders were neutral, while more SOF

¹ When referring to SOF operators and leaders, this section focuses only on the SOF operators and leaders who participated in the survey. Please see Appendix B (Methodology) and the *Participation Report* (Technical Report #2010011003) for more information about survey respondents.

² Appendix C (p. 33) provides comparisons between components for the standard change items for SOF operators and leaders.

leaders than SOF operators were supportive (Figure 1, p. 9). Comparing the two groups, SOF leaders reported significantly greater support for the standard change than SOF operators.³

Figure 1. SOF Operator and Leader Reactions to the Standard Change



Comments from those who supported the standard change (Table 1, p. 11) along with comments from focus group participants (Table 2, p. 11) indicated that speaking and listening are the most important modalities that operators use while deployed.

“I feel that listening and speaking are more important to the operator while on deployment than listening and reading”

SOF Operator, Other Assignment
Supported the standard change

“It is practical to change the format to a listen and speaking. This is what the bulk of the operators will engage in while on their deployments.”

SOF Leader, 7th Special Forces Group (SFG)
Supported the standard change

“we listen and speak on deployments more than read”

SOF Operator, 95th Civil Affairs Brigade (CAB)
Supported the standard change

“The purpose of language for all soldiers is to make them capable of engaging locals to effectively accomplish the mission. Nothing could be more important in regards to language than listening and speaking skills.”

SOF Leader, 5th SFG
Supported the standard change

³ $t(1,744.69) = -3.07, p < .001$

“...with the mention of everything going to the OPI, that’s the first I’ve heard of it. I think that’s a great idea because, as you said, we speak more than we read. And I think that’s a really great idea.”

SOF Operator, 10th SFG focus group

Moderator: *“You guys did relatively well in speaking, do you feel like that’s your best skill? The one that you developed the most?”*

Participant: *“At that point I don’t know if it was necessarily better than my reading, that’s just my way of learning, but I think it’s definitely the most useful, I think it should be the standard—I think it should be the most important part.”*

SOF Operator, 1st SFG focus group

Table 1. SOF Operator and Leader Reactions to the Standard Change⁴

	Oppose		Neutral		Support		Total		Total
	Operators	Leaders	Operators	Leaders	Operators	Leaders	Operators	Leaders	
Supporting change – General	1	2	5	6	56	38	62	46	108
Speaking and listening are the most important proficiencies for operators	2	1	3	4	40	49	45	54	99
Need listening, speaking, and reading	13	22	7	7	24	26	44	55	99
Not familiar with change	0	1	13	22	9	11	22	34	56
None/NA/off topic	6	2	21	9	6	5	33	16	49
Opposing change – General	12	14	4	4	6	6	22	24	46
Not familiar with the OPI	0	4	9	10	8	11	17	25	42
Not getting paid for OPI or want a financial incentive	3	7	3	10	5	12	11	29	40
Skills should be relevant to their job	0	1	3	2	14	14	17	17	34
Need to match training to testing format	7	3	5	3	6	11	18	17	35
Against reading/DLPT	1	1	0	2	6	7	7	10	17
Total	45	58	73	79	180	190	298	327	625

Table 2. Focus Group Reactions to the Standard Change

	Comments
The test should focus on speaking	50
The test should focus on listening	29
The test should focus on reading	14
Lack experience with the OPI	9
Confusion between OPI and OPE	4
The test should focus on conversational listening	3
Positive implications of standard change	2
Negative implications of standard change	1
The test should focus on passive listening	1

⁴ Totals may differ from others throughout this section since *Table 1* only includes SOF operators and leaders who also commented on why they supported, opposed, or were neutral regarding the standard change.

SOF leaders and operators who were either neutral or opposed the standard change reported multiple reasons for their lack of support. First, some reported that reading proficiency should still be tested, which was also mentioned by participants who supported the change.

“A good DLPT would include speaking, listening and reading”

SOF Operator, AFSOC
Neutral on the standard change

“Listening and reading are still important skills to maintain. There should be a balance developed to test on all 4 skills.”

SOF Leader, AFSOC
Opposed the standard change

“I still think that all three elements should be tested. You can't take away one and expect the results of a mission to change. The soldier would still be lacking in one area.”

SOF Operator, 4th Psychological Operations Group (POG)
Supported the standard change

Second, others reported that training should change to match the new standard and emphasize speaking proficiency and the OPI.

“You had better do a lot more speaking training, since most of SWC is about reading.”

SOF Operator, Other Assignment
Neutral on the standard change

“Speaking the language is the most difficult task, if we are going to require a speaking test, the our training should involve immersion in the target language. Otherwise we are going to set our Soldiers up for failure.”

SOF Leader, 4th POG
Opposed the standard change

Third, some participants also commented that incentives should be offered for testing on the OPI.

“Unfortunately, the Two-Skill OPI does not qualify you for Language Proficiency Pay. If it did, then there would be more support for it. Therefore, team members will give it much less consideration than the DLPT. Some members do not try to pass the DPLT because they know they have not had the time to study enough to receive a high enough score to warrant Language Pay. Therefore, they are content to fail it and use their time on other maintaining other skill sets.”

SOF Leader, USASOC HQ
Neutral on the standard change

“It is ok as long as SOF personnel can still get paid for it. Why take an OPI, when the soldier has to take the DLPT as well. Seems like a waste of time, twice as much testing. It seems as though the SOF soldier is being constrained when it comes to being afforded the chance to earn language pay.”

SOF Operator, 1st SFG
Opposed the standard change

Communication of the standard change is important to USSOCOM’s policy of encouraging the development of speaking proficiency. Some SOF operators and leaders, particularly those neutral regarding the standard change, indicated that they were unfamiliar with the standard change and/or the OPI. This suggests more information dissemination is needed.

“I did not know that the standard had changed, which illustrates some of the problems with the overall SOF language program”

SOF Leader, 7th SFG
Neutral on the standard change

“I have had no experience with this test, yet it seems like it would be more relevant to the job we conduct as SF Operators.”

SOF Operator, Other Assignment
Neutral on the standard change

SECTION III: SOF OPERATOR OPI TESTING BACKGROUND

Part of the standard change included recognition of the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), particularly the two-skill OPI (speaking and participatory listening), as the test of record for assessing language proficiency (USSOCOM M 350-8, 2009). It is important to examine how many SOF operators⁵ have experience with OPI testing. In addition, any problems encountered during OPI testing need to be identified so they can be addressed and potentially eliminated since existing problems will likely only be exacerbated as demand for OPI testing increases. This section presents SOF operators' OPI testing experiences.

Research Questions

This section addresses the following questions:

- How many SOF operators have taken an official OPI?
- Have these SOF operators experienced problems taking the OPI?
 - If so, what types of problems have they experienced?

Main Findings

Nearly half of SOF operators reported having taken an official OPI (44%, $n = 505$), and most of these SOF operators have not encountered problems during testing (77%, $n = 448$). Of those who experienced problems, commonly reported issues included disruptions while testing, delays/problems receiving feedback on their score, and technical problems (e.g., not being able to hear the tester on the phone). Operators who last took an OPI in 2009 reported experiencing more technical problems, delays/problems receiving feedback, and other problems than operators who last took an OPI prior to 2009. While this could be due to the standard change and an increase in demand for the OPI, these issues should be investigated for correction since more OPI testing will be occurring.

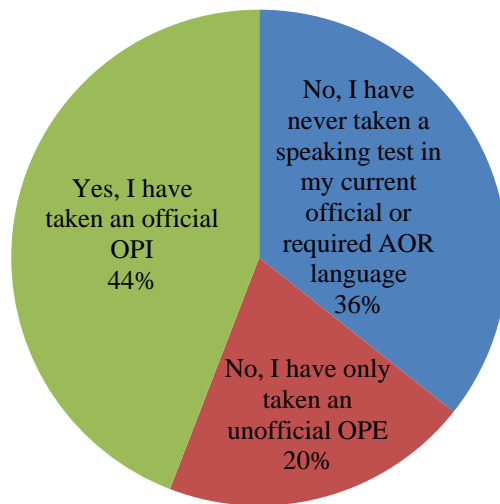
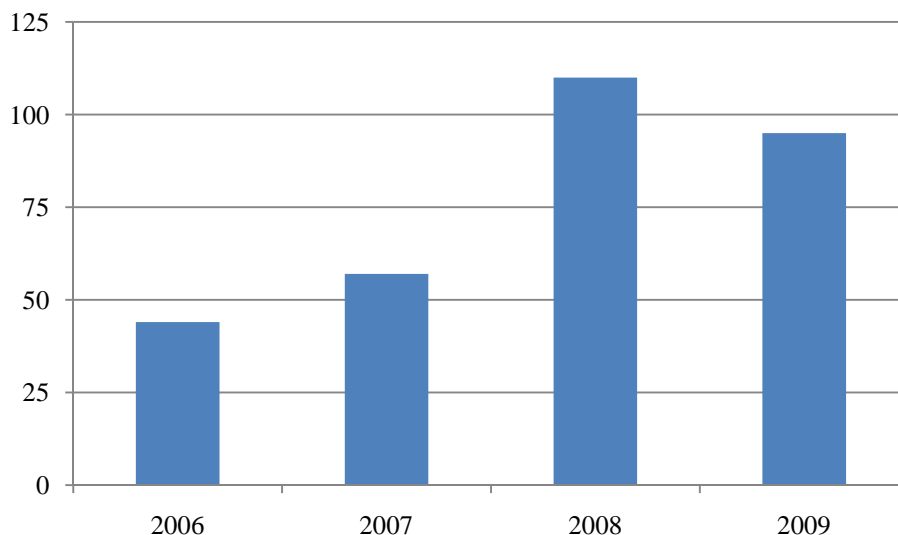
Detailed Findings

SOF Operator OPI Testing Background

Overall, 44% ($n = 505$) of SOF operators report they have taken an official OPI (Figure 2, p. 15), with most reporting they last took an OPI in 2008 ($n = 110$) and 2009 ($n = 95$; Figure 3, p. 15). Many SOF operators ($n = 186$) report taking an OPI prior to 2006.⁶ Most historic OPI testing likely took place at the end of initial acquisition training (IAT).

⁵ When referring to SOF operators, this section focuses only on the SOF operators who participated in the survey and reported they had taken an official OPI. Please see Appendix B (Methodology) and the *Participation Report* (Technical Report #2010011003) for more information about survey respondents.

⁶ Since the data prior to 2006 could not be broken down by year, it is mentioned here solely as a point of information.

Figure 2. SOF Operators' OPI Experience*Figure 3. SOF Operator OPI Testing by Year⁷*

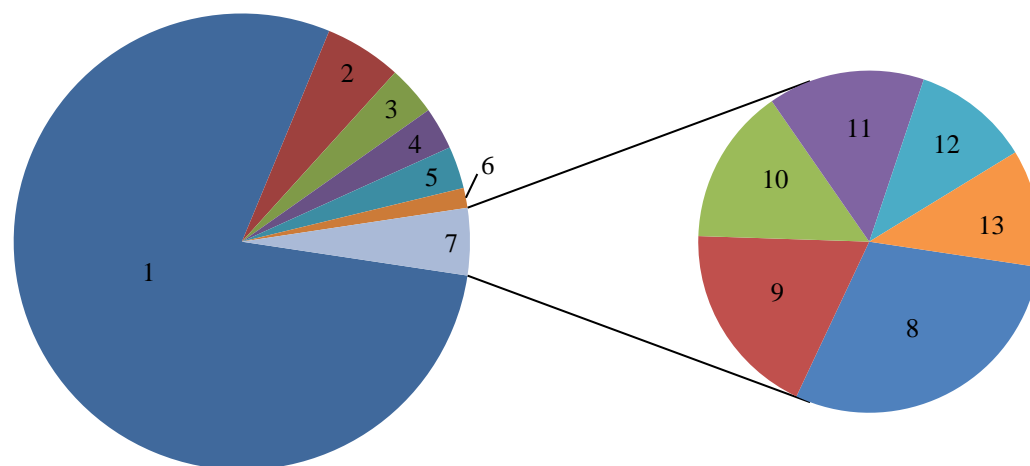
SOF Operator OPI Testing Experiences

Overall, 77% ($n = 448$) of SOF operators experienced no problems during OPI testing. Of those few SOF operators that experienced testing problems, the most commonly reported issue was disruptions during testing. Disruptions may suggest a lack of sufficient control and/or standardization in the testing environments or that facilities are not structured for OPI testing, which should be investigated. Other

⁷ Only includes SOF operators who reported last taking an OPI since 2006. Data prior to 2006 were not included because the data could not be separated by year.

problems SOF operators occasionally encountered included delays/problems receiving feedback on their score and technical problems (Figure 4, p. 16). Non-frequent issues included test-scheduling delays, problems accessing the test center, and “other” issues. Many SOF operators who experienced “other” problems during testing reported technical difficulties and problems interacting with the OPI interviewer.

Figure 4. OPI Testing Experiences.



Area	Reported Testing Problems	Percentage of Total Responses
1	None	77%
2	Disruptions while taking test	5%
3	Delays/problems receiving feedback on your score	3%
4	Technical issues	3%
5	Test scheduling delays	3%
6	Problems accessing testing centers	1%
7	Other	3%
8	<i>Technical difficulties</i>	1%
9	<i>Other</i>	1%
10	<i>Tester problems</i>	1%
11	<i>Different dialect used in the field</i>	1%
12	<i>Problems with scoring</i>	1%
13	<i>Structure of the test</i>	1%

Note. Testing problems presented in italics were coded from responses to the “other” response category. Percentages may not sum to 100% as respondents could select more than one problem.

Respondents’ follow-up comments elaborate on the problems they experienced during OPI testing (Table 3, p. 18). For example, some of the disruptions during testing included problems in the testing environment:

“The testing center had background noise and disruptions from the building and the vehicle traffic outside the building”

SOF Operator, 7th SFG

Some of the participants commented on problems with scoring, often suggesting they did not believe it was a fair system:

“GREAT TEST BUT HORRIBLE GRADING SCALE. EVERY PERSON IN OUR LANGUAGE RECEIVED THE SAME SCORE EVEN THOUGH MEMBERS DLPT SCORES RANGED FROM 0+ TO 3”

SOF Operator, 1st SFG

Many technical problems reported appear to be telephone audio problems:

“The telephone connection made it nearly impossible to understand the individual on the other end of the line. I continually had to ask the tester to repeat themselves due to the poor connection which was interpreted as me not understanding the original question or comment made by the instructor”

SOF Operator, Deployed SO Unit

Focus group participants also discussed some issues during OPI testing, including scheduling difficulties:

“The testing thing, I can tell you why that happened. You only schedule them on Monday, and they only have 24 slots every Monday. So that’s why you get two battalions trying to schedule guys all the time. I’m trying to schedule our company right now, and I can’t do it until June. And that’s one of the biggest problems.”

SOF Operator, 1st SFG

Problems interacting with the interviewer also came up during the focus groups:

Participant: *“[...] you have to know the language, but it’s also how you build rapport with the...”*

Moderator: *“With the test administrator?”*

Participant: *“Right, right. Because I know we had a Marine who was testing on Iraqi and there was like Shias and all that stuff. They basically clashed over the phone. He got a really good score on the DLPT, he had a 2/3 on the DLPT, but on the OPI he just, there was nothing.”*

Moderator: *“There was some tension there.”*

Participant: *“Right, right, I think he got an 0/1 or something.”*

SOF Operator,
Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC) focus group

Table 3. Elaboration of OPI Testing Problems

	Percentage of Total Responses
Process problems	27%
NA/None/Not relevant	19%
Telephone/audio problems	19%
Problems with scoring	15%
Speaking and listening are important/Should be part of the DLPT	15%
Should be done face-to-face	8%
Total N	26

Note. Percentages may not sum to 100% as respondents could comment on more than one topic.

Comparing SOF operators who reported their last OPI was between 2006 and 2009, more SOF operators who last took an OPI in 2009 (31%) encountered testing problems than SOF operators who last tested in 2006 (14%), 2007 (11%), and 2008 (17%; Table 4, p. 18). It appears the increase in testing problems resulted from increases in technical issues and delays/problems receiving score feedback. The higher percentage of issues reported by SOF operators who last took an OPI in 2009 may be related to the standard change and increase in demand for the OPI. However, it may be attributable to other causes, such as lack of representativeness in the sample of survey participants who last took the OPI in each of these years. Another possibility is that those who recently took the OPI remember problems encountered better than those who took the test previously.

Table 4. Time of Last OPI by Testing Problems⁸

	2006	2007	2008	2009
None	86%	89%	83%	69%
Other	2%	5%	5%	12%
Delays/problems receiving feedback on your score	0%	0%	6%	11%
Technical issues	3%	2%	1%	11%
Disruptions while testing	5%	5%	8%	8%
Test scheduling delays	0%	2%	4%	4%
Problems accessing testing centers	5%	2%	0%	2%
Total N	44	57	109	95

Note. Percentages may not sum to 100% as respondents could select more than one problem.

⁸ Only includes SOF operators who reported last taking an OPI since 2006.

SECTION IV: OPI TESTING PERCEPTIONS

How much SOF leaders pay attention to SOF operator language testing and view it as important can impact SOF operators' motivation to perform well on the test as well as SOF operator perceptions of language testing. Since USSOCOM implemented a standard change to assess language proficiency through Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) testing, the number of SOF leaders who have shifted their focus to SOF operator OPI testing should be explored as an indication of the SOFLO community's application of USSOCOM's standard change. One purpose of this section is to document how SOF leaders perceive their operators' OPI ratings.

It is also important to examine SOF operator and leader⁹ perceptions of the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). Research has found that test takers who perceive tests as more accurate have higher motivation to perform well (Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004). Additionally, test takers who perceive tests as more related to their jobs also have higher motivation to perform well. Test taker motivation is important since motivated test takers are more likely to engage and demonstrate their full capability and, therefore, the test will function as designed, providing an accurate assessment of speaking proficiency in this case. A second purpose of this section is to examine SOF operator and leader accuracy and job-relatedness perceptions of the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) to determine if these are areas of concern for future testing.

Research Questions

This section addresses the following questions:

- How many SOF leaders are familiar with the OPI?
- How do SOF leaders perceive their operators' OPI ratings?
 - Do leaders pay attention to their operators' OPI ratings?
 - How important are operator OPI ratings to leaders?
 - How often do leaders encourage operators to study and do well on the OPI?
- Do SOF operators and leaders perceive the OPI as a job-related and accurate assessment of speaking proficiency?

Main Findings

For SOF leaders, 59% ($n = 442$) reported familiarity with the OPI, but only 12% ($n = 88$) could comment on their operators' scores. Of those 88 SOF leaders, 68% ($n = 60$) reported they pay attention to SOF operator OPI ratings; 56% ($n = 49$) indicated that SOF operator OPI ratings were *important* or *very important*; and 44% ($n = 38$) *often* or *very often* encouraged SOF operators to study and do well on the OPI. However, the small number of SOF leaders who indicated they could respond to these items limits the extent to which these findings generalize to other SOF leaders.

⁹ When referring to SOF operators and leaders, this section focuses only on the SOF operators and leaders who participated in the survey and were either familiar with or could comment on the OPI. Please see Appendix B (Methodology) and the *Participation Report* (Technical Report #2010011003) for more information about survey respondents.

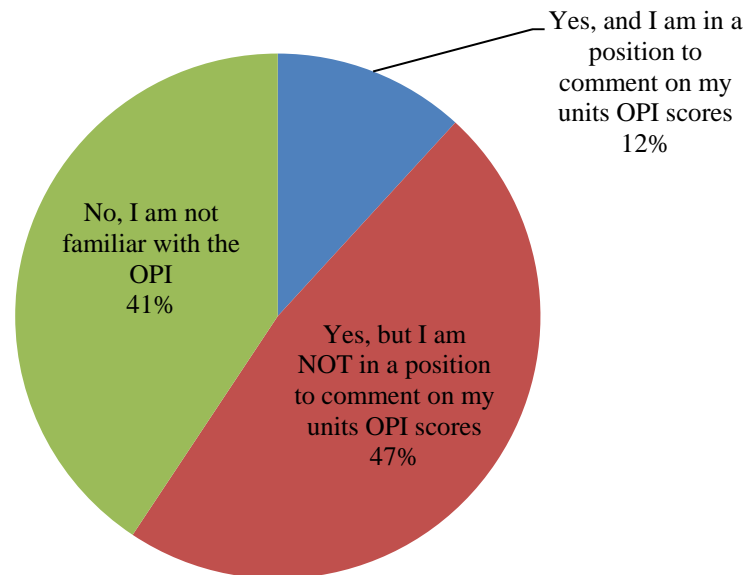
The majority of SOF operators and leaders had favorable perceptions of the OPI, and SOF leaders had slightly more favorable perceptions than SOF operators. Both SOF operators and leaders view the OPI as an accurate means for assessing speaking proficiency and as related to what operators do while deployed. Moreover, SOF operators and leaders who supported the standard change agreed more strongly that the OPI relates to what SOF operators do on missions, suggesting support for the standard change may be driven by perceiving the OPI as a job-relevant assessment. However, 44% ($n = 214$) of SOF operators and 58% ($n = 50$) of SOF leaders agreed that there are language tasks SOF operators need to perform while deployed that are not covered by the OPI, and many of these respondents indicated that the test should cover military-related topics or relate more closely to their mission.

Detailed Findings

SOF Leader OPI Testing Background

Very few SOF leaders ($n = 88$) were in a position to comment on their unit's scores, limiting the generalizability of the findings reported in this section. While 59% ($n = 442$) of SOF leaders were familiar with the OPI, only 12% ($n = 88$) could comment (Figure 5, p. 20).

Figure 5. SOF Leader OPI Familiarity

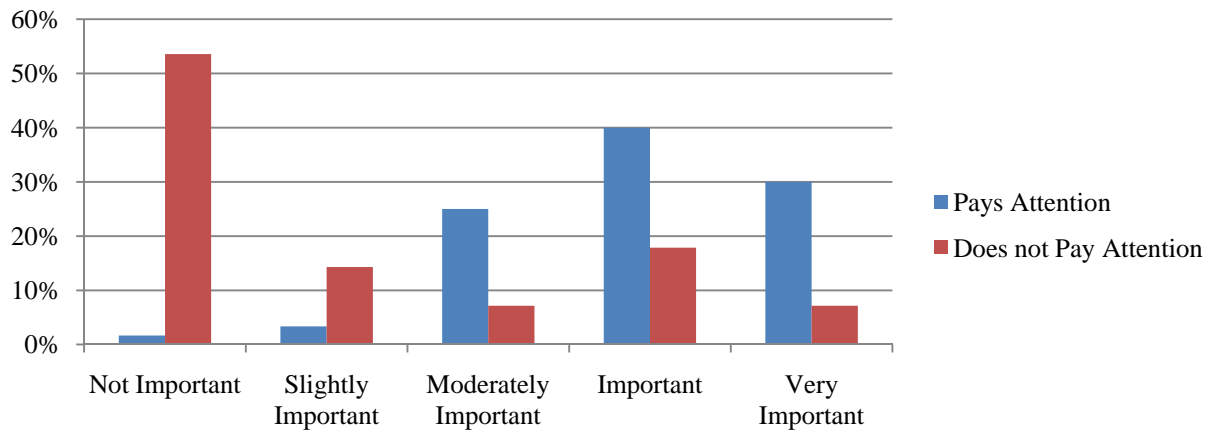


SOF Leader Uses of OPI Scores

Of the SOF leaders familiar with the OPI and who could comment ($n = 88$), 68% ($n = 60$) reported paying attention to SOF operator OPI ratings. SOF operator OPI ratings were *important* or *very important* to 56% ($n = 49$) of SOF leaders, and 45% ($n = 38$) of SOF leaders *often* or *very often* encouraged SOF operators to study for and do well on the test. Moreover, those SOF leaders that pay attention indicated

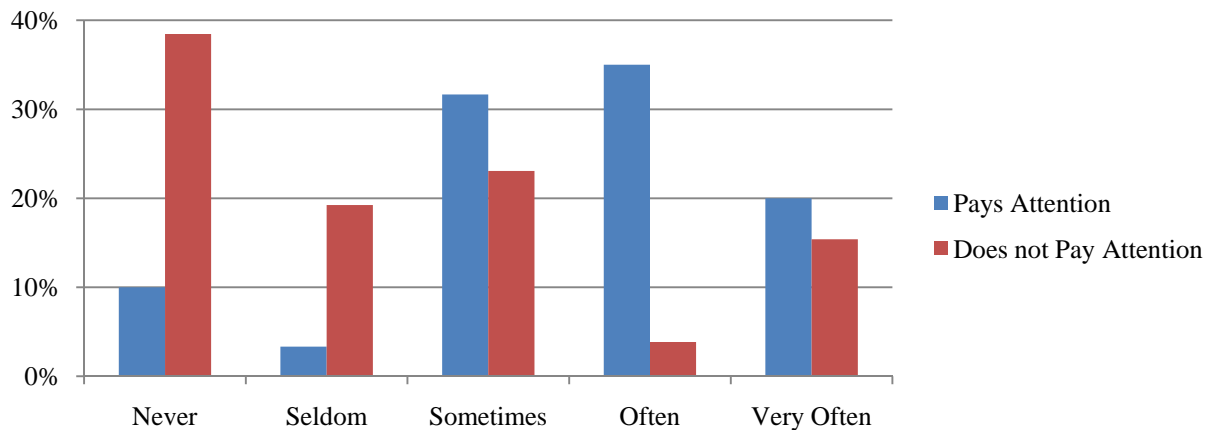
that OPI ratings are more important (Figure 6, p. 21) and encouraged SOF operators to study and do well more often (Figure 7, p. 21) than SOF leaders who reported not paying attention.

Figure 6. Importance of OPI Ratings to SOF Leaders



Note. Pays Attention = leaders who indicated they pay attention to operators' OPI ratings, Does not Pay Attention = leaders who indicated they do not pay attention to operators' OPI ratings.

Figure 7. SOF Leader Encouragement to Study and Do Well on the OPI



Note. Pays Attention = leaders who indicated they pay attention to operators' OPI ratings, Does not Pay Attention = leaders who indicated they do not pay attention to operators' OPI ratings.

OPI's Perceived Job-relatedness and Accuracy¹⁰

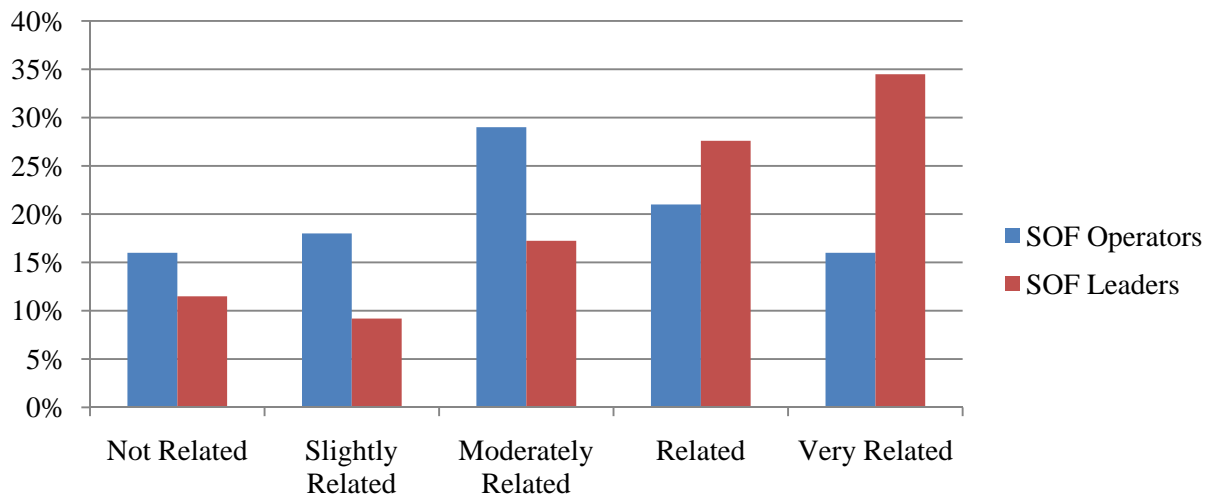
SOF operators and leaders perceived the OPI as related to what SOF operators do on the job and during deployments and as an accurate assessment of SOF operators' ability to use language on the job and on

¹⁰ Appendices D (p. 34) and E (p. 37) provide component comparisons for how SOF operators and leaders perceived the OPI. Appendix F (p.40) provides MI linguist/09L OPI perceptions. Appendix G (p.42) presents SOF trainee perceptions.

mission-related tasks. Both groups agreed that the OPI was *moderately related to very related* to job requirements (Figure 8, p. 22), with SOF leaders reporting higher levels of relatedness than SOF operators.

For both groups, those who supported the standard change more often reported that the OPI relates to SOF operator job requirements and accurately assesses SOF operator language proficiency. Specifically, SOF operators and leaders who supported the standard change had higher agreement that the OPI accurately reflects their ability to use the language on the job and that the content of the OPI is related to what operators do during deployments.¹¹

Figure 8. Perceptions of OPI Relatedness to Operators' Jobs



Comments clarified SOF operator and leader perceptions of the OPI (Table 5, p. 23). Many SOF operators and leaders reported that the OPI was a good gauge of language proficiency because it assesses speaking proficiency through conversation. Focus group participants also commented on the OPI's capacity for assessing speaking proficiency through a conversation (Table 6, p. 23):

"This is a better way to measure one language capability by active conversation, but I realize that this would be more time consuming."

SOF Operator, 7th SFG

"How do we all really communicate in real life? I didn't get that. You don't just go on and talk about something else. We repeat. We interact. We clarify. That's one of the benefits of that telephone test that they used to do because that way a real human could actually assess what you knew, what you were learning."

SOF Operator, 5th SFG focus group

Even though SOF operators and leaders reported favorable job-relatedness perceptions of the OPI, many operators (44%, $n = 214$) and leaders (58%, $n = 50$) agreed that there are language tasks SOF operators

¹¹ Appendices H (p. 44) and I (p. 47) provide SOF operator and leader OPI perceptions compared to their support for the standard change.

need to perform while deployed not covered by the OPI. One commonly mentioned criticism by this group is that the test lacks military-related scenarios:

“As a Civil Affairs Soldier you have to get information in all aspect of the country and OPI does not cover that (Political, Agricultural etc..).”

SOF Operator, 95th CAB

Table 5. OPI Perception Comment Themes

	SOF Operators	SOF Leaders
None/NA/taken too long ago	49	7
Good gauge of language proficiency/ability to communicate	22	14
Should cover military related topics or be related to the mission	12	2
Emphasis on the OPI	3	4
OPI wasn't relevant (wrong modality, etc)	4	1
Need more monetary incentives for OPI	0	6
Too subjective	0	2
Not effective for reading needs or not good replacement for DLPT	3	2
Needs to be done face-to-face	3	1
Cannot use dialect	2	1
Not mandatory	1	2
Problem with Navy requiring baseline DLPT levels before taking OPI	0	1

Table 6. Focus Group OPI Themes

	Comments
Other positive OPI comments	6
OPI is a good indicator of proficiency	5
Other negative OPI comments	2
OPI content is related to mission/job/military	1

SECTION V: CONCLUSIONS

Overall, this report contains many positive findings related to the standard change and Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) testing. However, SOF operators and leaders identified some potential limitations of the standard change and OPI testing that may limit their acceptance and support. This section provides the key conclusions based on feedback provided by survey respondents and focus group participants.

Reactions to the Standard Change

Overall, many SOF operators and leaders supported the standard change and very few opposed it. Despite these positive reactions to the standard change, some SOF operators and leaders reported they were neutral (neither opposed nor supported) regarding the standard change. Based on their comments, three possible reasons emerged for these neutral and opposing opinions:

- First, many respondents commented that reading is still an important skill for mission success and should be included in language testing. This suggests that a reading test may be necessary for some SOF operators.
- Second, some were concerned that SOF operator language training and language proficiency incentive programs had not been updated to align with OPI testing, so SOF operators would not be prepared for OPI testing nor would they be motivated to take it. Thus, ensuring SOF operators are prepared for the OPI and paid for OPI scores at the appropriate levels should be addressed within all components. Communicating how the OPI is used to pay Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus – currently and as policy changes – will be key to addressing this concern for SOF personnel.
- Third, unfamiliarity with the change and/or inexperience with OPI testing, particularly two-skill OPI testing, were mentioned as reasons why SOF operators and leaders were undecided about the standard change. This suggests that information about the standard change and associated testing should be widely disseminated.

Operator OPI Testing Background

Overall, 44% ($n = 505$) of SOF operators reported having taken an official OPI and 77% ($n = 448$) of these SOF operators have not encountered problems during testing. Of those few SOF operators who experienced problems, issues included disruptions while testing, delays/problems receiving feedback on their score, and technical problems (e.g., not being able to hear the tester on the phone). Disruptions suggest a lack of sufficient control and/or standardization in the testing environments or that facilities are not structured for OPI testing. This should be investigated. These findings suggest the OPI often functions properly, but the occasional problems that do arise should be addressed as they are likely to become more frequent as OPI testing increases with the standard change.

OPI Testing Perceptions

While more than half of SOF leaders who responded were familiar with the OPI, only 12% ($n = 88$) could comment on their operators' scores. Of these SOF leaders ($n = 88$), 68% indicated they *pay attention* to SOF operator OPI ratings; 56% indicated that SOF operator OPI ratings were *important* or *very important*; and 44% *often* or *very often* encouraged SOF operators to study and do well on the OPI. This may be a result of SOF leaders' unfamiliarity with the standard change. As OPI testing continues to increase, the amount of attention and importance SOF leaders place on OPI scores should be monitored to see if they also increase.

Many SOF operators and leaders had favorable perceptions of the OPI's job-relatedness and accuracy. Both view the OPI as an accurate means for assessing speaking proficiency and as related to what SOF operators do while deployed. Moreover, SOF operators and leaders who supported the standard change agreed more strongly that the OPI accurately assesses and relates to what SOF operators do on missions. However, some SOF operators and leaders agreed that there are language tasks SOF operators need to perform while deployed that are not covered by the OPI. Additionally, many of these respondents indicated that the test should cover military-related topics or relate more closely to their mission. Since the OPI is a measure of functional speaking proficiency (and participatory listening proficiency in the case of the two-skill OPI), more mission-related prompts and role plays could be introduced into the OPI without compromising the assessment of proficiency tasks. However, this would require a modification of the assessment and retraining of the OPI testers.

REFERENCES

- Bauer, T. N., Maertz, C. P., Dolen, M. R., & Campion, M. A. (1998). Longitudinal assessment of applicant reactions to employment testing and test outcome feedback. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 83*, 892-903.
- Chan, D., Schmitt, N., Jennings, D., Clause, C., & Delbridge, K. (1998). Applicant perceptions of test fairness: Integrating justice and self-serving bias perspectives. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 6*, 232-239.
- Gilliand, S. W. (1993). The perceived fairness of selection systems: An organizational justice perspective. *Academy of Management Review, 18*, 694-734.
- Hausknecht, J. P., Day, D. V., & Thomas, S. C. (2004). Applicant reactions to selection procedures: An updated model and meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology, 57*, 639-683.
- Smither, J., Millsap, R., Stoffey, R., Reilly, R., & Pearlman, K. (1996). An experimental test of the influence of selection procedures on fairness perceptions, attitudes about the organizations, and job pursuit intentions. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 10*, 297-318.
- SWA Consulting Inc. (October, 2010). *Inside AOR use of language*. (Technical Report #2010011010). Raleigh, NC: Author.
- SWA Consulting Inc. (February, 2010). *Methodology report*. (Technical Report #2010011002). Raleigh, NC: Author.
- SWA Consulting Inc. (February, 2010). *Participation report*. (Technical Report #2010011003). Raleigh, NC: Author.
- SWA Consulting Inc. (October, 2010). *Outside AOR use of language*. (Technical Report #2010011011). Raleigh, NC: Author.
- USSOCOM M 350-8. (November, 2009). *Training: The Special Operations Forces Language Program*. MacDill Air Force Base, FL: Author.

ABOUT SWA CONSULTING INC.

SWA Consulting Inc. (formerly Surface, Ward, and Associates) provides analytics and evidence-based solutions for clients using the principles and methods of industrial/organizational (I/O) psychology. Since 1997, SWA has advised and assisted corporate, non-profit and governmental clients on:

- Training and development
- Performance measurement and management
- Organizational effectiveness
- Test development and validation
- Program/training evaluation
- Work/job analysis
- Needs assessment
- Selection system design
- Study and analysis related to human capital issues
- Metric development and data collection
- Advanced data analysis

One specific practice area is analytics, research, and consulting on foreign language and culture in work contexts. In this area, SWA has conducted numerous projects, including language assessment validation and psychometric research; evaluations of language training, training tools, and job aids; language and culture focused needs assessments and job analysis; and advanced analysis of language research data.

Based in Raleigh, NC, and led by Drs. Eric A. Surface and Stephen J. Ward, SWA now employs close to twenty I/O professionals at the masters and PhD levels. SWA professionals are committed to providing clients the best data and analysis upon which to make evidence-based decisions. Taking a scientist-practitioner perspective, SWA professionals conduct model-based, evidence-driven research and consulting to provide the best answers and solutions to enhance our clients' mission and business objectives. SWA has competencies in measurement, data collection, analytics, data modeling, systematic reviews, validation, and evaluation.

For more information about SWA, our projects, and our capabilities, please visit our website (www.swa-consulting.com) or contact Dr. Eric A. Surface (esurface@swa-consulting.com) or Dr. Stephen J. Ward (sward@swa-consulting.com).

The SWA Consulting Inc. team members contributed to this report (listed in alphabetical order):

Ms. Sarah C. Bienkowski
Mr. Milton V. Cahoon
Dr. Reanna Poncheri Harman
Mr. Ryan Phillips
Dr. Eric A. Surface
Dr. Stephen J. Ward
Ms. Sheila L. Wilcox
Ms. Natalie Wright

APPENDIX A: ABOUT THE LCNA PROJECT

In 2003-2004, the Special Operations Forces Language In 2003-2004, the Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) sponsored the *SOF Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* to inform the development of a language transformation strategy in response to a GAO report (2003). This *SOF Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* collected current-state information about language usage, proficiency, training, and policy issues (e.g., Foreign Language Proficiency Pay, FLPP) from SOF personnel, SOF unit leaders, and other personnel involved in SOF language. The project used multiple data collection methods and provided the SOFLO with valid data to develop a comprehensive language transformation strategy and advocate for the SOF perspective on language issues within the DoD community.

In a continuing effort to update knowledge of language and culture needs while informing strategic plan development, the SOFLO commissioned the *2009 SOF Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project* (LCNA) to reassess the language and culture landscape across the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and develop a strategy for the next five years. Data were collected between March and November, 2009 from personnel in the SOF community, including SOF operators and leaders. Twenty-three focus groups were conducted between March and June, 2009. A comprehensive, web-based survey for SOF operators and leaders was launched on 26 October and closed on 24 November, 2009.

This project's findings will be disseminated through reports and briefings (see Appendix A, Figure 1). Two foundational reports document the methodology and participants associated with this project. The remaining reports are organized in three tiers. Twenty-five *Tier I* reports focus on specific, limited issues (e.g., *Inside AOR Use of Language*). *Tier II* reports integrate and present the most important findings across related *Tier I* reports (e.g., *Use of Language and Culture on Deployment*) while including additional data and analysis on the topic. Most, but not all, *Tier I* reports will roll into *Tier II* reports. One *Tier III* report presents the most important findings, implications, and recommendations across all topics explored in this project. The remaining *Tier III* reports present findings for specific SOF organizations [e.g., Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), Special Forces (SF) Command]. All *Tier III* reports are associated with a briefing. Report topics are determined by the SOFLO and subject to change.

In June, 2009, the GAO reported that the Department of Defense is making progress toward transforming language and regional proficiency capabilities but still does not have a strategic plan in place to continue development that includes actionable goals and objectives. The findings from this study can be used by the SOFLO and leaders at USSOCOM to continue strategic planning and development in this area.

This project design, logistics, data collection, initial analysis and first eight reports of this project were conducted by SWA Consulting Inc. (SWA) under a subcontract with SRC (SR20080668 (K142); Prime # N65236-08-D-6805). The additional reports are funded under a separate contracting vehicle with Gemini Industries Inc. [GEM02-ALMBOS-0018 (10210SWA-1); Prime # USZA22-02-D-0015]. For questions or more information about the SOFLO and this project, please contact Mr. Jack Donnelly (john.donnelly@socom.mil). For specific questions related to data collection or reports associated with this project, please contact Dr. Eric A. Surface (esurface@swa-consulting.com) or Dr. Reanna Poncheri Harman (rpharman@swa-consulting.com) with SWA Consulting Inc.

Appendix A, Figure 1. Report Overview



Note: Foundation reports are referenced by every other report. Colors represent *Tier I* reports that roll (integrate) into an associated *Tier II* report. Reports in black are final reports on the topic but may be cited by other reports. *Tier II* reports roll into the *Tier III* reports. All *Tier III* reports include an associated briefing.

APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY

Participants

Focus Group

Twenty-three focus groups were conducted with 126 SOF personnel across the SOF community. Focus groups were conducted with Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC), Navy Special Warfare Command (WARCOM), and United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC).¹² Comments from focus group participants regarding the OPI are included throughout this report.

Survey

Survey respondents received the operator version of the OPI and standard change items if they indicated one of the following SOF community roles:

- SOF Operator
- SOF Operator assigned to other duty
- Currently in the training pipeline for SOF
- Military Intelligence (MI) Linguist or 09L assigned or attached to a SOF unit
- SOF Retirees

Respondents received the leader version of the OPI and standard change items if they designated one of the following SOF community roles:

- SOF Unit Commanders and Unit Leadership of O3 Commands or higher, including Staff, Support, and Specialists
- Command Language Program Manager or Component Language Program Managers (CLPMs)
- Language Office Personnel
- Instructor

Throughout this report, “SOF operator” refers to respondents who indicated they were a SOF Operator or a SOF Operator assigned to other duty. The “SOF leader” responses throughout this report only include SOF Unit Commanders and Unit Leadership of O3 Commands or higher. In addition for comparisons, responses from “MI Linguists or 09Ls assigned or attached to SOF unit” are provided in Appendix F and Appendix G provides responses from operators currently in a training pipeline.

SOF Retirees were excluded from this report because of the small number that had taken an official OPI. Command Language Program Manager or Component Language Program Managers (CLPMs), Language Office Personnel, and Instructors were excluded from this report because of the small number who said they were in a position to comment on the OPI.

¹² See *Participation Report* (Technical Report #2010011003) for participant details. See *Methodology Report* (Technical Report #2010011002) for the focus group interview guide.

SOF Type Classification

SOF operators and leaders assigned to the USASOC were separated according to their SOF type in Appendices C through E.¹³ Respondents from USASOC were classified in SOF types [i.e., Civil Affairs (CA), Military Information Support Group (MISG), and Special Forces (SF)] based on the following criteria:

- USASOC unit to which they were assigned (e.g., 1st SFG classified as SF, 4th POG as MISG, 95th CAB as CA)
- Reported MOS (e.g., 18 series were classified as SF, 37 series as MISG, 38 series as CA)

Measures

Survey respondents received closed-ended and open-ended items related to the OPI. Whether SOF operators and leaders were presented these items depended on their response to the following items:

SOF Operators

- Have you taken an official Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) in your current official or required language or your primary/control language?

Respondents that indicated “Yes, I have taken an official OPI” (44%, $n = 505$) received the OPI follow-up items. Respondents that indicated “No, I have only taken an unofficial OPE” (20%, $n = 231$) or “No, I have never taken a speaking test in my current official or required AOR language” (36%, $n = 408$) were branched to the next survey section.

SOF Leaders

- Are you familiar with official Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPIs)?

Respondents that indicated “Yes, and I am in a position to comment on my unit’s OPI scores” (12%, $n = 88$) received the OPI follow-up items. Respondents that indicated “Yes, but I am not in a position to comment on my unit’s OPI scores” (47%, $n = 354$) or “No, I am not familiar with the OPI” (41%, $n = 303$) were branched to the next survey section.

OPI and Standard Change Items

SOF operators who had taken an official OPI in their current official or required language were asked about any technical problems experienced during their last testing event, as well as their perceptions of the OPI’s relatedness to their jobs and accuracy in assessing their language skills. SOF leaders who were familiar with the OPI and could comment on it were asked about how much they pay attention to OPI ratings, how important the ratings are to them, and how much they encourage their operators to study and

¹³ For further details on participation and attrition rates, please refer to the *Participation Report* (Technical Report #2010011003).

do well on the test. They also responded to a series of items that assessed their perceptions of the OPI's relatedness to operators' jobs, and accuracy in assessing operator language ability.

Standard Change Items

SOF leaders and operators responded to one closed-ended and one open-ended item regarding the standard change, regardless of whether they were familiar with or were able to comment on the OPI.

Analyses









































All closed-ended items were analyzed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics. For select items, frequencies and average (i.e., mean) responses for each item are presented in Appendices C through E. To compare responses across groups of participants (e.g., leaders v. operators), inferential statistics (e.g., analysis of variance, *t*-tests) were used to determine if any observed differences are likely to exist in the broader population of interest.

For qualitative data (i.e., open-ended comments), raters created a content code (i.e., theme) list based on available responses for each item. A primary rater then coded each response and a secondary rater coded 30% of the responses. Raters determined the consistency of codes and discussed any disagreements to consensus. Frequency of occurrence for each theme is presented in Sections II through IV. A similar process was used to code the focus group data.¹⁴ Two different coders from the survey comments rated the content of each focus group segment. Totals for themes and verbatim comments related to OPI testing and/or the standard change are provided throughout the report.

¹⁴ For further details on these methods, please refer to the *Methodology Report* (Technical Report #2010011002).









































APPENDIX C: REACTIONS TO THE STANDARD CHANGE

Appendix C, Table 1. SOF Operators - The test of record for SOCOM has changed from the DLPT, which assesses listening and reading, to a two-skill OPI, which assesses listening and speaking. What is your reaction to this change?

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Strongly Oppose	Somewhat Oppose	Neither Oppose nor Support	Somewhat Support	Strongly Support
Overall	1,039	3.55	5% 	6% 	45% 	21% 	24% 
AFSOC	19	3.32	11% 	0% 	47% 	32% 	11% 
WARCOM	8	4.37	0% 	0% 	25% 	13% 	63% 
MARSOC	12	3.75	8% 	0% 	33% 	25% 	33% 
USASOC	751	3.53	5% 	7% 	44% 	20% 	24% 
CA	149	3.63	4% 	6% 	40% 	22% 	28% 
MISG	124	3.41	9% 	9% 	39% 	19% 	24% 
SF	471	3.52	4% 	6% 	48% 	20% 	23% 









































Note. 1 = Strongly Oppose, 2 = Somewhat Oppose, 3 = Neither Oppose nor Support, 4 = Somewhat Support, 5 = Strongly Support. Not all organizations (e.g., JSOC, TSOC) are represented in the table. There were no significant group differences between components or Army SOF types.

Appendix C, Table 2. SOF Leaders - The test of record for SOCOM has changed from the DLPT which assesses listening and reading to a two-skill OPI, which assesses listening and speaking. What is your reaction to this change?

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Strongly Oppose	Somewhat Oppose	Neither Oppose nor Support	Somewhat Support	Strongly Support
Overall	800	3.70	3% 	6% 	37% 	27% 	27% 
AFSOC	9	3.33	11% 	0% 	44% 	33% 	11% 
WARCOM	11	4.27	0% 	0% 	27% 	18% 	55% 
MARSOC	22	4.05	0% 	5% 	32% 	18% 	45% 
USASOC	488	3.70	3% 	7% 	34% 	28% 	28% 
CA	63	3.67	3% 	5% 	40% 	27% 	25% 
MISG	95	3.61	3% 	7% 	36% 	33% 	21% 
SF	253	3.76	3% 	7% 	33% 	26% 	32% 









































Note. 1 = Strongly Oppose, 2 = Somewhat Oppose, 3 = Neither Oppose nor Support, 4 = Somewhat Support, 5 = Strongly Support. Not all organizations (e.g., JSOC, TSOC) are represented in the table. There were no significant group differences between components or Army SOF types.

APPENDIX D: SOF OPERATOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE OPI*Appendix D, Table 1. How related is the OPI to what you do on the job?*

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Not Related	Slightly Related	Moderately Related	Related	Very Related
Overall	495	3.02	16% 	18% 	29% 	21% 	16% 
AFSOC	6	3.67	0% 	0% 	50% 	33% 	17% 
WARCOM	3	2.67	33% 	0% 	33% 	33% 	0% 
MARSOC	3	4.00	0% 	0% 	33% 	33% 	33% 
USASOC	369	2.98	18% 	18% 	28% 	20% 	16% 
CA	63	3.57 ^b	8% 	12% 	26% 	23% 	31% 
MISG	91	3.02 ^a	14% 	19% 	33% 	17% 	16% 
SF	207	2.78 ^a	23% 	19% 	26% 	20% 	11% 






































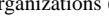


Note. 1 = Not Related, 2 = Slightly Related, 3 = Moderately Related, 4 = Related, 5 = Very Related. Not all organizations (e.g., JSOC, TSOC) are represented in the table. Army SOF types sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different responses. There were no significant differences between components.

Appendix D, Table 2. The content of the OPI is clearly related to what I do during deployment.

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Overall	484	3.02	12% 	13% 	43% 	25% 	7% 
AFSOC	6	4.00	0% 	0% 	33% 	33% 	33% 
WARCOM	3	3.33	0% 	0% 	67% 	33% 	0% 
MARSOC	2	3.50	0% 	0% 	50% 	50% 	0% 
USASOC	361	2.97	14% 	14% 	41% 	24% 	7% 
CA	63	3.59 ^b	3% 	5% 	38% 	38% 	16% 
MISG	91	2.95 ^a	13% 	11% 	49% 	21% 	5% 
SF	207	2.79 ^a	17% 	18% 	39% 	21% 	5% 






































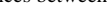


Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Not all organizations (e.g., JSOC, TSOC) are represented in the table. Army SOF types sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different responses. There were no significant differences between components.

Appendix D, Table 3. My OPI rating accurately reflects my ability to use language while on the job.

Group	n	M	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Overall	483	3.20	8% 	12% 	39% 	34% 	7% 
AFSOC	6	4.50 ¹	0% 	0% 	0% 	50% 	50% 
WARCOM	3	3.67 ^{1,2}	0% 	0% 	33% 	67% 	0% 
MARSOC	3	3.67 ^{1,2}	0% 	0% 	67% 	0% 	33% 
USASOC	358	3.16 ²	9% 	13% 	37% 	33% 	7% 
CA	63	3.43 ^b	0% 	19% 	32% 	37% 	13% 
MISG	91	3.23 ^{ab}	10% 	8% 	38% 	37% 	7% 
SF	204	3.04 ^a	12% 	14% 	38% 	30% 	6% 









































Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Not all organizations (e.g., JSOC, TSOC) are represented in the table. Army SOF types sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different responses. Components sharing the same number (e.g., 1 or 2) did not report significantly different responses.

Appendix D, Table 4. Operators who perform well on the OPI are more likely to successfully use language in the field than those who perform poorly on the OPI.

Group	n	M	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Overall	484	3.43	6% 	7% 	38% 	33% 	15% 
AFSOC	6	4.50	0% 	0% 	17% 	17% 	67% 
WARCOM	3	4.33	0% 	0% 	33% 	67% 	0% 
MARSOC	3	3.67	0% 	0% 	67% 	0% 	33% 
USASOC	359	3.40	8% 	8% 	36% 	33% 	15% 
CA	63	3.73 ^a	2% 	6% 	30% 	41% 	21% 
MISG	91	3.37 ^{ab}	11% 	4% 	35% 	35% 	14% 
SF	205	3.30 ^b	8% 	10% 	38% 	30% 	14% 









































Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Not all organizations (e.g., JSOC, TSOC) are represented in the table. Army SOF types sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different responses. There were no significant differences between components.

Appendix D, Table 5. My OPI rating is an accurate reflection of my ability to perform job/mission-related tasks in the target language.

Group	n	M	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Overall	485	3.13	8% 	15% 	42% 	26% 	9% 
AFSOC	6	4.33 ^a	0% 	0% 	0% 	67% 	33% 
WARCOM	3	4.00 ^{ab}	0% 	0% 	33% 	33% 	33% 
MARSOC	3	3.33 ^{ab}	0% 	33% 	33% 	0% 	33% 
USASOC	360	3.05 ^b	9% 	17% 	43% 	24% 	8% 
CA	63	3.32	2% 	22% 	32% 	32% 	13% 
MISG	91	3.03	11% 	11% 	48% 	23% 	7% 
SF	206	2.98	10% 	17% 	43% 	22% 	7% 









































Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Not all organizations (e.g., JSOC, TSOC) are represented in the table. Components sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different responses. There were no significant differences between Army SOF types.

Appendix D, Table 6. There are language tasks I need to perform when deployed that are not covered by the OPI.

Group	n	M	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Overall	485	3.40	5% 	8% 	43% 	30% 	14% 
AFSOC	6	4.17	0% 	0% 	17% 	50% 	33% 
WARCOM	3	3.33	0% 	33% 	33% 	0% 	33% 
MARSOC	3	4.00	0% 	0% 	33% 	33% 	33% 
USASOC	360	3.41	6% 	9% 	41% 	29% 	16% 
CA	63	3.54	2% 	13% 	37% 	29% 	21% 
MISG	91	3.33	7% 	8% 	44% 	30% 	12% 
SF	206	3.41	6% 	8% 	40% 	29% 	17% 









































Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Not all organizations (e.g., JSOC, TSOC) are represented in the table. There were no significant differences between components or Army SOF types.

APPENDIX E: SOF LEADER PERCEPTIONS OF THE OPI*Appendix E, Table 1. How related is the OPI to what operators in your unit do on the job?*

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Not Related	Slightly Related	Moderately Related	Related	Very Related
Overall	87	3.64	11% 	9% 	17% 	28% 	34% 
AFSOC	1	5.00	0% 	0% 	0% 	0% 	100% 
WARCOM	2	5.00	0% 	0% 	0% 	0% 	100% 
MARSOC	1	4.00	0% 	0% 	0% 	100% 	0% 
USASOC	65	3.54	12% 	11% 	18% 	28% 	31% 
<i>CA</i>	6	3.67	0% 	0% 	50% 	33% 	17% 
<i>MISG</i>	20	3.35	20% 	0% 	20% 	45% 	15% 
<i>SF</i>	29	3.52	14% 	14% 	17% 	17% 	38% 









































Note. 1 = Not Related, 2 = Slightly Related, 3 = Moderately Related, 4 = Related, 5 = Very Related. Not all organizations (e.g., JSOC, TSOC) are represented in the table. There were no significant differences between components or Army SOF types.

Appendix E, Table 2. The content of the OPI is clearly related to what operators do during deployment.

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Overall	86	3.34	7% 	14% 	33% 	31% 	15% 
AFSOC	1	4.00	0% 	0% 	0% 	100% 	0% 
WARCOM	2	4.50	0% 	0% 	0% 	50% 	50% 
MARSOC	1	4.00	0% 	0% 	0% 	100% 	0% 
USASOC	64	3.23	8% 	16% 	36% 	27% 	14% 
<i>CA</i>	6	3.67	0% 	0% 	50% 	33% 	17% 
<i>MISG</i>	19	3.26	5% 	11% 	47% 	26% 	11% 
<i>SF</i>	29	2.97	14% 	21% 	31% 	24% 	10% 









































Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Not all organizations (e.g., JSOC, TSOC) are represented in the table. There were no significant differences between components or Army SOF types.

Appendix E, Table 3. An operator's OPI rating accurately reflects their ability to use language while on the job.

Group	n	M	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Overall	86	3.56	8% 	6% 	26% 	43% 	17% 
AFSOC	1	4.00	0% 	0% 	0% 	100% 	0% 
WARCOM	2	4.50	0% 	0% 	0% 	50% 	50% 
MARSOC	1	4.00	0% 	0% 	0% 	100% 	0% 
USASOC	64	3.48	9% 	6% 	28% 	39% 	17% 
CA	6	4.17	0% 	0% 	17% 	50% 	33% 
MISG	19	3.53	0% 	5% 	47% 	37% 	11% 
SF	29	3.34	14% 	7% 	24% 	41% 	14% 









































Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Not all organizations (e.g., JSOC, TSOC) are represented in the table. There were no significant differences between components or Army SOF types.

Appendix E, Table 4. Operators who perform well on the OPI are more likely to successfully use language in the field than those who perform poorly on the OPI.

Group	n	M	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Overall	86	3.81	3% 	3% 	23% 	48% 	22% 
AFSOC	1	4.00	0% 	0% 	0% 	100% 	0% 
WARCOM	2	5.00	0% 	0% 	0% 	0% 	100% 
MARSOC	1	4.00	0% 	0% 	0% 	100% 	0% 
USASOC	64	3.75	3% 	3% 	28% 	47% 	19% 
CA	6	3.50	0% 	0% 	50% 	50% 	0% 
MISG	19	3.79	0% 	0% 	32% 	58% 	11% 
SF	29	3.72	7% 	3% 	24% 	41% 	24% 









































Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Not all organizations (e.g., JSOC, TSOC) are represented in the table. There were no significant differences between components or Army SOF types.

Appendix E, Table 5. An operator's OPI rating is an accurate reflection of their ability to perform job/mission-related tasks in the target language.

Group	n	M	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Overall	86	3.52	6% 	9% 	28% 	41% 	16% 
AFSOC	1	4.00	0% 	0% 	0% 	100% 	0% 
WARCOM	2	4.50	0% 	0% 	0% 	50% 	50% 
MARSOC	1	4.00	0% 	0% 	0% 	100% 	0% 
USASOC	64	3.45	6% 	9% 	33% 	36% 	16% 
CA	6	3.67	0% 	0% 	33% 	67% 	0% 
MISG	19	3.32	5% 	11% 	42% 	32% 	11% 
SF	29	3.45	7% 	10% 	31% 	34% 	17% 

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Not all organizations (e.g., JSOC, TSOC) are represented in the table. There were no significant differences between components or Army SOF types.






Appendix E, Table 6. There are language tasks operators need to perform when deployed that are not covered by the OPI.

Group	n	M	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Overall	86	3.71	1% 	7% 	34% 	36% 	22% 
AFSOC	1	3.00	0% 	0% 	100% 	0% 	0% 
WARCOM	2	3.50	0% 	0% 	50% 	50% 	0% 
MARSOC	1	3.00	0% 	0% 	100% 	0% 	0% 
USASOC	64	3.77	2% 	5% 	33% 	38% 	23% 
CA	6	4.00	0% 	0% 	33% 	33% 	33% 
MISG	19	3.79	0% 	0% 	42% 	37% 	21% 
SF	29	3.83	0% 	7% 	28% 	41% 	24% 

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Not all organizations (e.g., JSOC, TSOC) are represented in the table. There were no significant differences between components or Army SOF types.






APPENDIX F: MI LINGUISTS AND 09L SURVEY RESPONSES

Appendix F, Table 1. How related is the OPI to what operators in your unit do on the job?

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Not Related	Slightly Related	Moderately Related	Related	Very Related
MI Linguists or 09L	37	2.81	19% 	24% 	24% 	22% 	11% 






Note. 1 = Not Related, 2 = Slightly Related, 3 = Moderately Related, 4 = Related, 5 = Very Related.

Appendix F, Table 2. The content of the OPI is clearly related to what operators do during deployment.

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
MI Linguists or 09L	36	3.03	14% 	14% 	36% 	28% 	8% 






Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Appendix F, Table 3. An operator's OPI rating accurately reflects their ability to use language while on the job.

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
MI Linguists or 09L	36	3.14	11% 	14% 	36% 	28% 	11% 






Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Appendix F, Table 4. Operators who perform well on the OPI are more likely to successfully use language in the field than those who perform poorly on the OPI.

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
MI Linguists or 09L	36	3.33	8% 	8% 	39% 	31% 	14% 






Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Appendix F, Table 5. An operator's OPI rating is an accurate reflection of their ability to perform job/mission-related tasks in the target language.

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
MI Linguists or 09L	36	3.03	11% 	19% 	36% 	22% 	11% 

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.






Appendix F, Table 6. There are language tasks operators need to perform when deployed that are not covered by the OPI.

Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
MI Linguists or 09L	36	3.50	6% 	6% 	44% 	22% 	22% 

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.






APPENDIX G: CURRENTLY IN THE TRAINING PIPELINE RESPONSES

Appendix G, Table 1. How related is the OPI to what operators in your unit do on the job?

Group	n	M	Not Related	Slightly Related	Moderately Related	Related	Very Related
Pipeline	8	3.25	13% 	25% 	13% 	25% 	25% 






Note. 1 = Not Related, 2 = Slightly Related, 3 = Moderately Related, 4 = Related, 5 = Very Related.

Appendix G, Table 2. The content of the OPI is clearly related to what operators do during deployment.

Group	n	M	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Pipeline	7	3.43	0% 	14% 	43% 	29% 	14% 






Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Appendix G, Table 3. An operator's OPI rating accurately reflects their ability to use language while on the job.

Group	n	M	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Pipeline	7	2.86	14% 	29% 	14% 	43% 	0% 






Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Appendix G, Table 4. Operators who perform well on the OPI are more likely to successfully use language in the field than those who perform poorly on the OPI.

Group	n	M	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Pipeline	7	3.86	0% 	0% 	43% 	29% 	29% 






Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Appendix G, Table 5. An operator's OPI rating is an accurate reflection of their ability to perform job/mission-related tasks in the target language.

Group	n	M	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Pipeline	7	3.00	14% 	14% 	29% 	43% 	0% 






Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Appendix G, Table 6. There are language tasks operators need to perform when deployed that are not covered by the OPI.

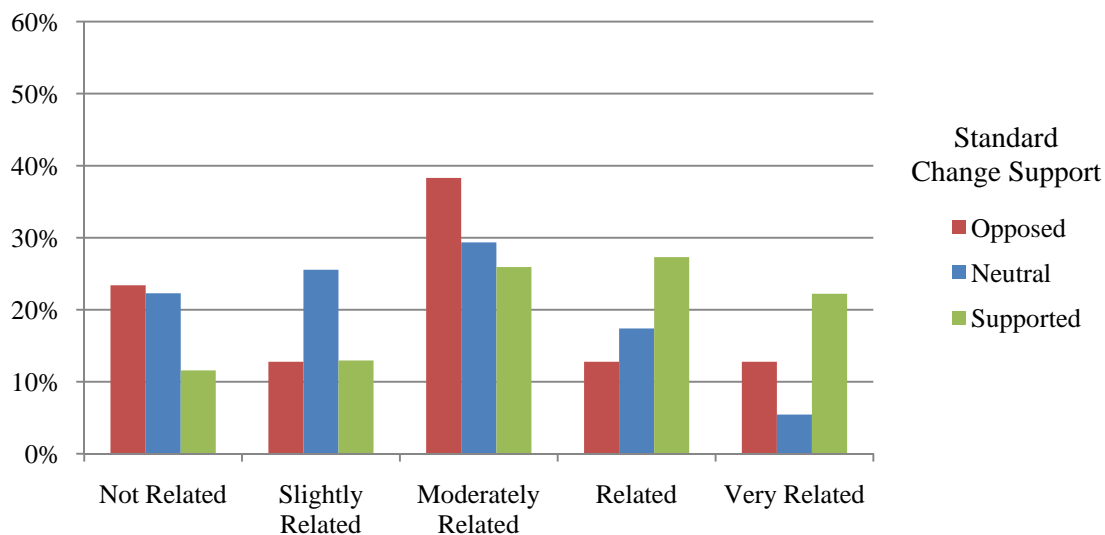
Group	n	M	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Pipeline	7	4.00	0% 	0% 	29% 	43% 	29% 

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

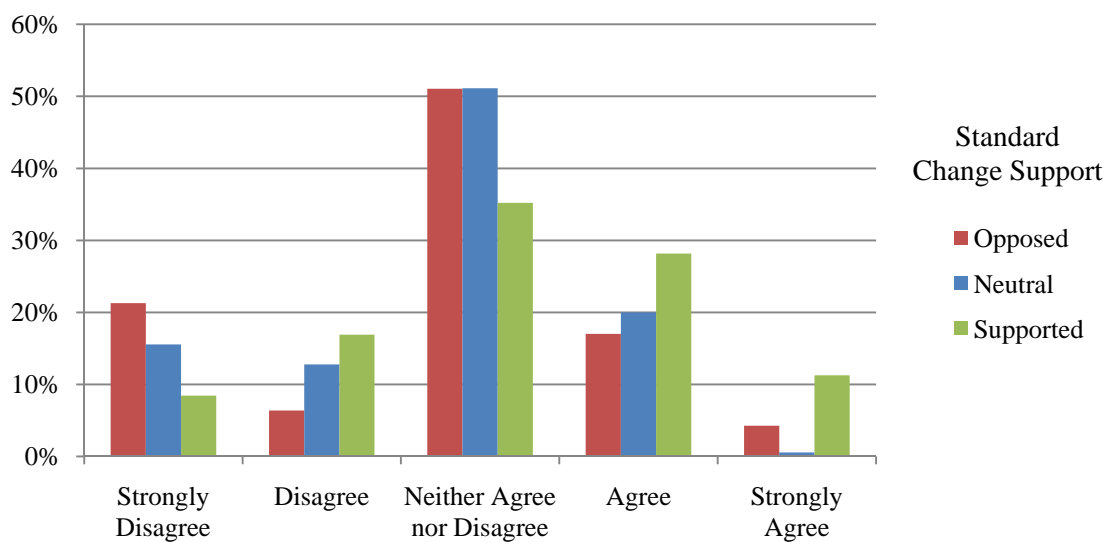
Appendix G, Table 7. Leaders - The test of record for SOCOM has changed from the DLPT which assesses listening and reading to a two-skill OPI, which assesses listening and speaking. What is your reaction to this change?

Group	n	M	Strongly Oppose	Some what Oppose	Neither Oppose nor Support	Some what Support	Strongly Support
Pipeline	86	3.86	1% 	3% 	38% 	22% 	35% 

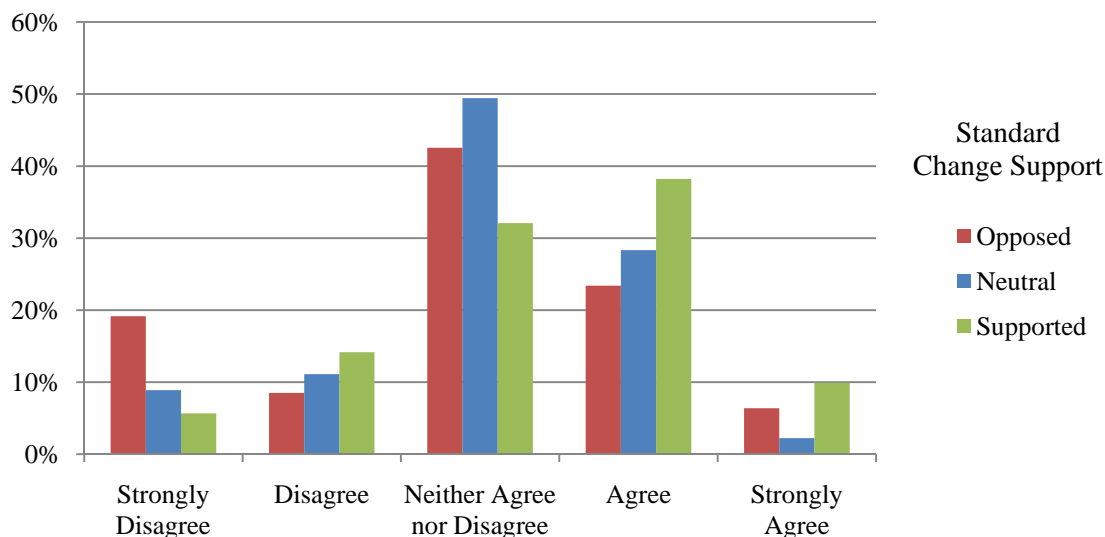
Note. 1 = Strongly Oppose, 2 = Somewhat Oppose, 3 = Neither Oppose nor Support, 4 = Somewhat Support, 5 = Strongly Support.

APPENDIX H: SOF OPERATOR OPI PERCEPTIONS BY STANDARD CHANGE SUPPORT*Appendix H, Figure 1. How related is the OPI to what you do on the job?*

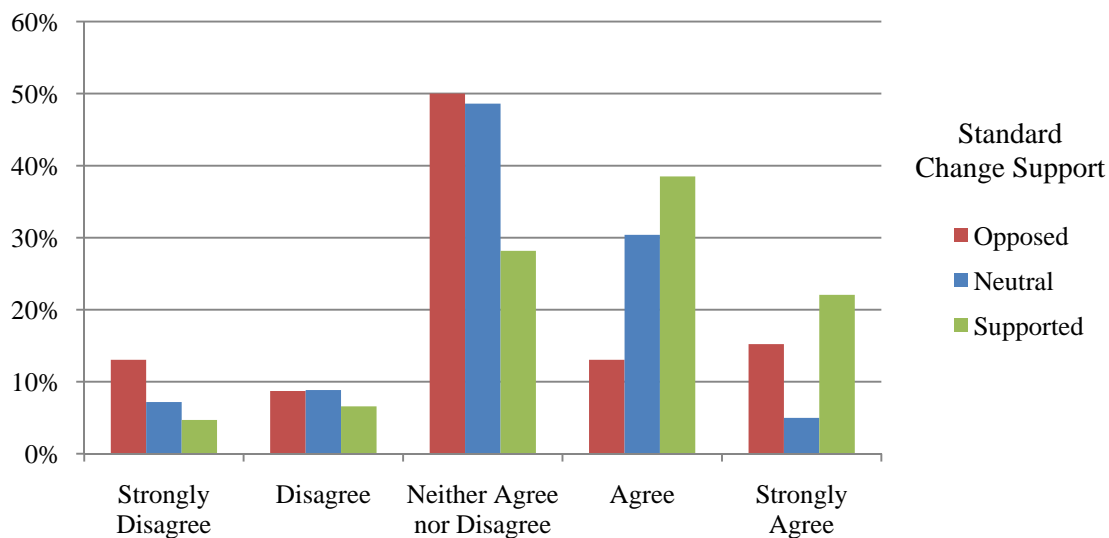
Note. Opposed = opposed the standard change, Neutral = neither opposed nor supported the standard change, Supported = supported the standard change.

Appendix H, Figure 2. The content of the OPI is clearly related to what I do during deployment.

Note. Opposed = opposed the standard change, Neutral = neither opposed nor supported the standard change, Supported = supported the standard change.

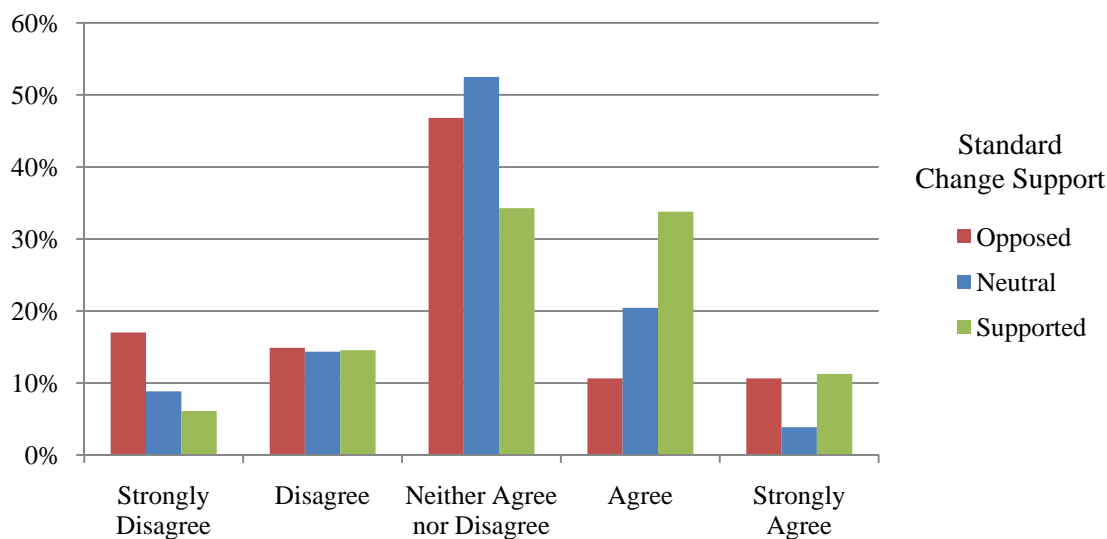
Appendix H, Figure 3. My OPI rating accurately reflects my ability to use language while on the job.

Note. Opposed = opposed the standard change, Neutral = neither opposed nor supported the standard change, Supported = supported the standard change.

Appendix H, Figure 4. Operators who perform well on the OPI are more likely to successfully use language in the field than those who perform poorly on the OPI.

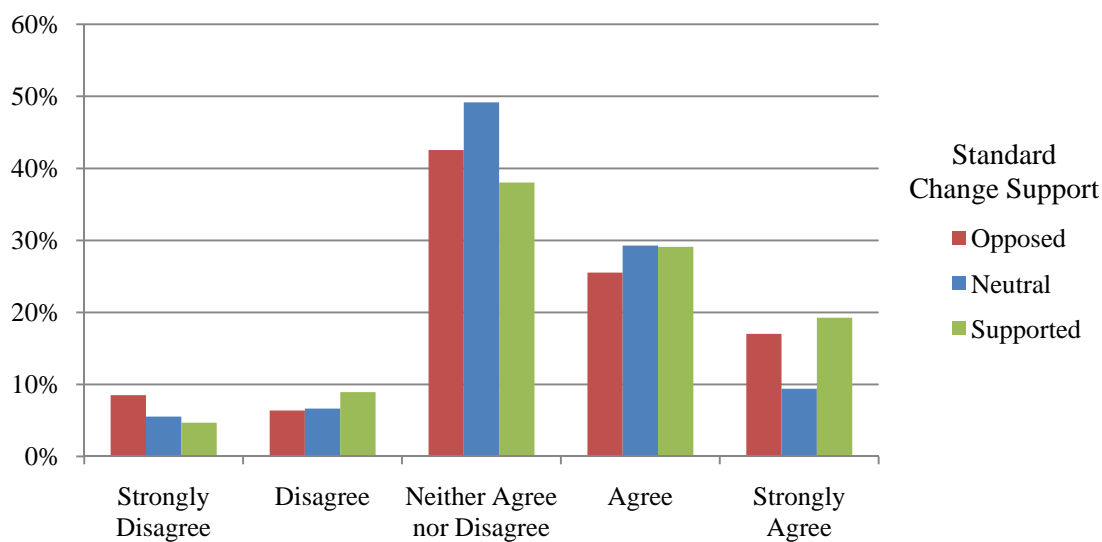
Note. Opposed = opposed the standard change, Neutral = neither opposed nor supported the standard change, Supported = supported the standard change.

Appendix H, Figure 5. My OPI rating is an accurate reflection of my ability to perform job/mission-related tasks in the target language.



Note. Opposed = opposed the standard change, Neutral = neither opposed nor supported the standard change, Supported = supported the standard change.

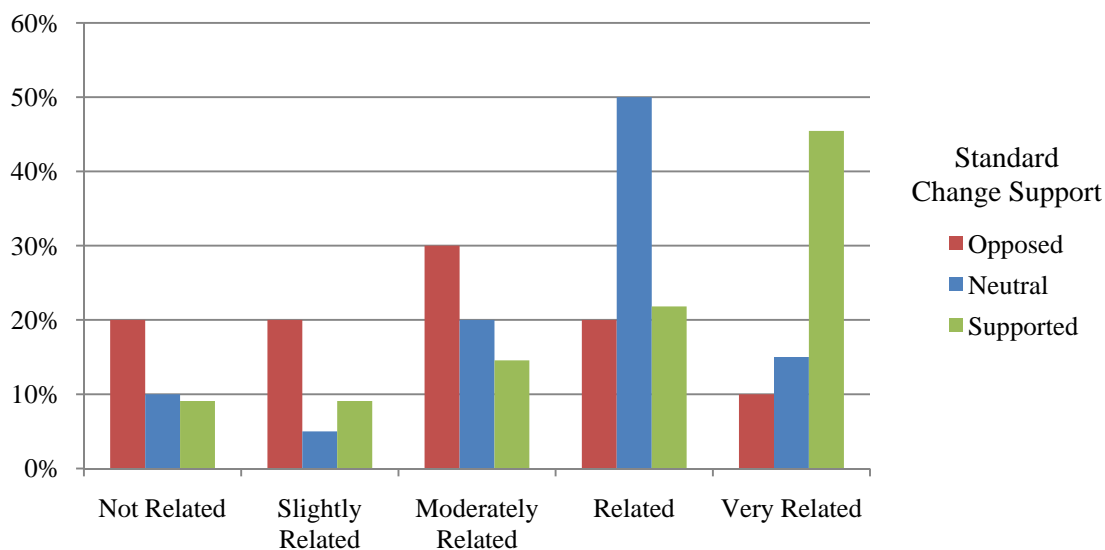
Appendix H, Figure 6. There are language tasks I need to perform when deployed that are not covered by the OPI.



Note. Opposed = opposed the standard change, Neutral = neither opposed nor supported the standard change, Supported = supported the standard change.

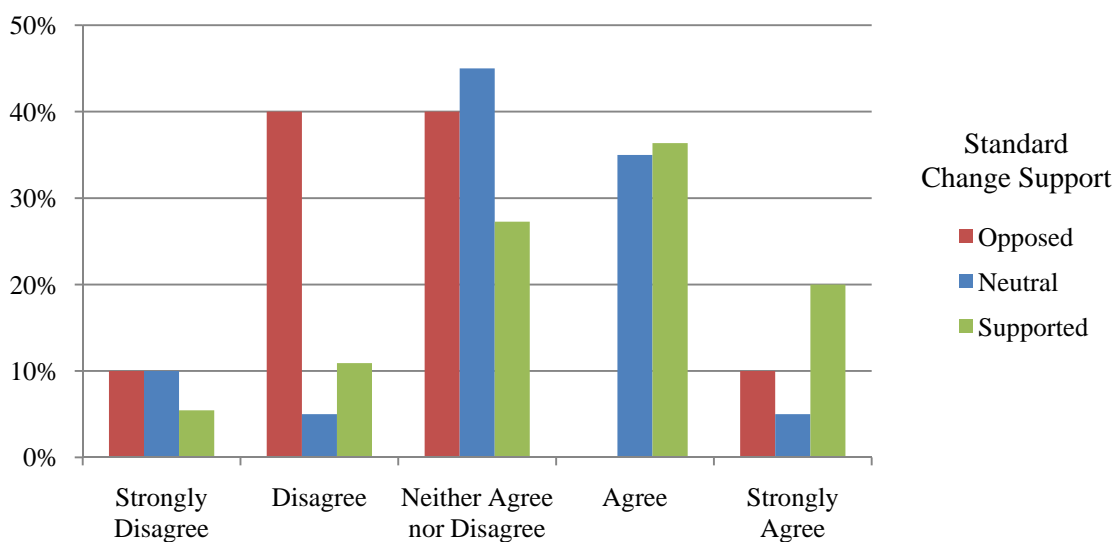
APPENDIX I: SOF LEADER OPI PERCEPTIONS BY STANDARD CHANGE SUPPORT

Appendix I, Figure 1. How related is the OPI to what operators do on the job?



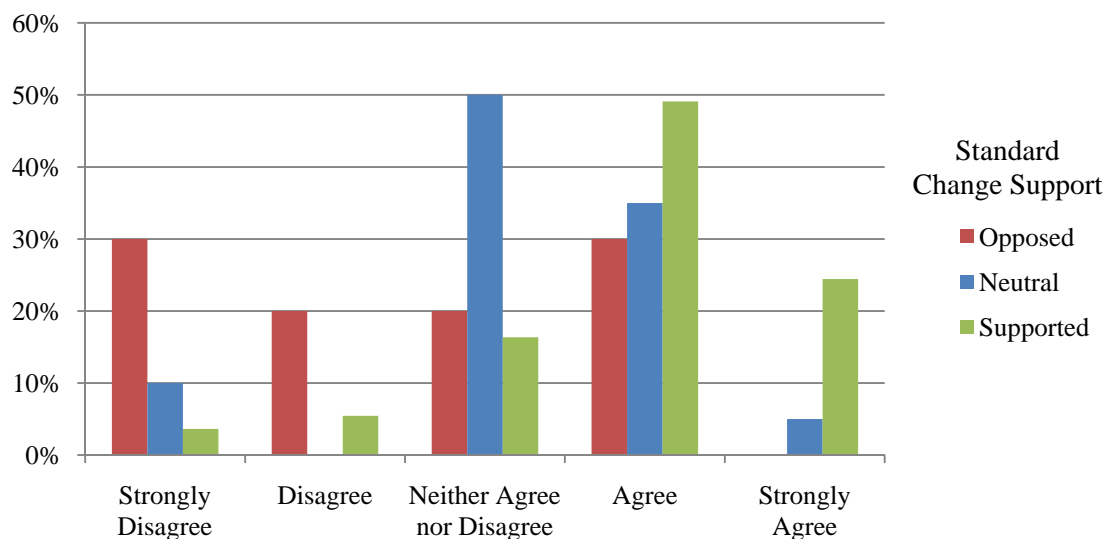
Note. Opposed = opposed the standard change, Neutral = neither opposed nor supported the standard change, Supported = supported the standard change.

Appendix I, Figure 2. The content of the OPI is clearly related to what operators do during deployment.



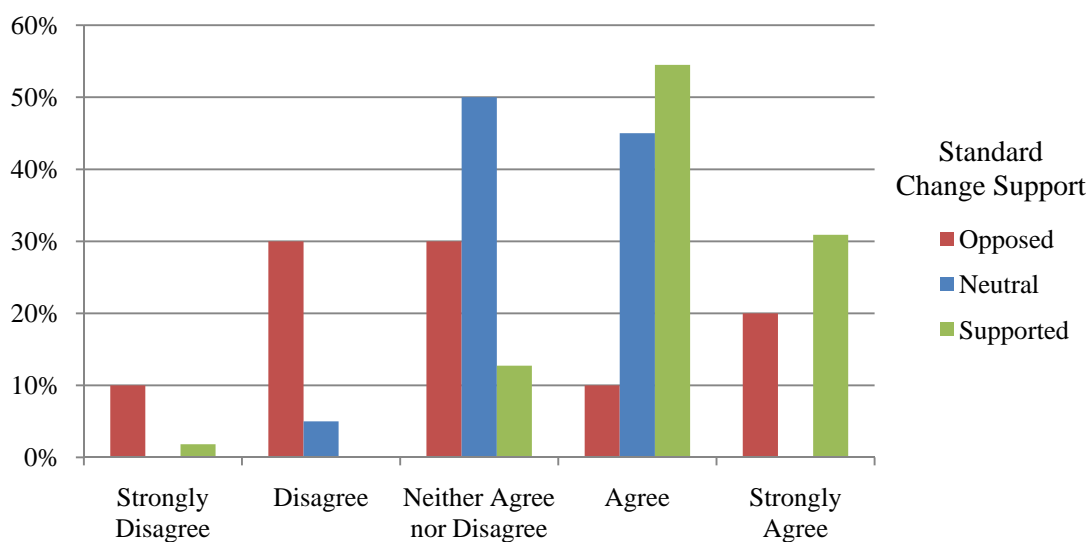
Note. Opposed = opposed the standard change, Neutral = neither opposed nor supported the standard change, Supported = supported the standard change.

Appendix I, Figure 3. An operator's OPI rating accurately reflects their ability to use language while on the job.



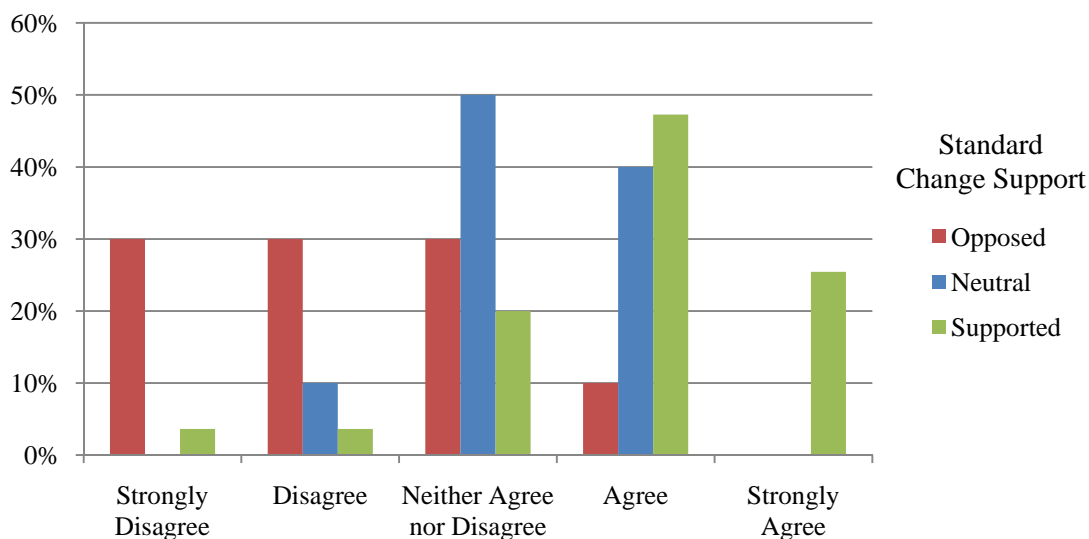
Note. Opposed = opposed the standard change, Neutral = neither opposed nor supported the standard change, Supported = supported the standard change.

Appendix I, Figure 4. Operators who perform well on the OPI are more likely to successfully use language in the field than those who perform poorly on the OPI.



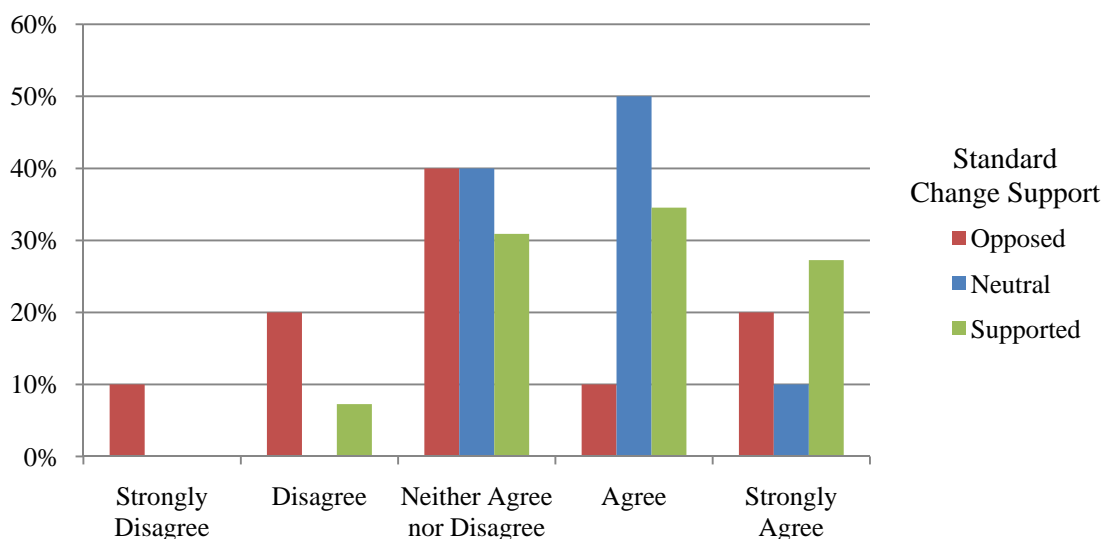
Note. Opposed = opposed the standard change, Neutral = neither opposed nor supported the standard change, Supported = supported the standard change.

Appendix I, Figure 5. An operator's rating is an accurate reflection of their ability to perform job/mission-related tasks in the target language.



Note. Opposed = opposed the standard change, Neutral = neither opposed nor supported the standard change, Supported = supported the standard change.

Appendix I, Figure 6. There are language tasks operators need to perform when deployed that are not covered by the OPI.



Note. Opposed = opposed the standard change, Neutral = neither opposed nor supported the standard change, Supported = supported the standard change.

APPENDIX J: COMMENT CODE DEFINITIONS

SOF operators and leaders provided comments to the following prompts:

- *Provide any specific feedback that you have related to the standard change.*
- *Responses for “Other” problems experienced during OPI testing.*
- *Use the space below to provide any specific feedback that you have to issues you experienced while taking the OPI.*
- *Please provide any specific feedback you have related to the OPI.*

All comments were content analyzed to extract common themes. The resulting themes are provided below by item prompt with a definition and verbatim exemplar comments that illustrate the theme. For more information about this study’s content analysis process, please refer to the *Methodology Report* (Technical Report # 2010011002).

Note: Exemplar comments are presented verbatim and are uncorrected for spelling and other mistakes.

Provide any specific feedback that you have related to the standard change.

- Supporting change – General
 - Definition: Respondents made a comment that was supportive of the standard change but was not specific.
 - “It makes more sense. We interact internationally through listening and speaking...reading is often just a bonus.”
 - “I like it”
- Speaking and listening are the most important proficiencies for operators
 - Definition: Respondent believed speaking and listening were most important. This also includes respondents who specifically indicated that it was more important than listening/reading.
 - “Reading is good for an intelligence analyst but for an operator 90% of his time is verbal communication with a foreign national”
 - “This is a good change. Speaking and listening are far more important than reading.”
- Need listening, speaking, and reading
 - Definition: Respondents indicated that the standard should reflect speaking, listening and reading.
 - “37F operators need to have reading skills in addition to listening/speaking.”
 - “I do believe that there is a need for individuals to learn how to read and write. It helps the individual understand the grammar rules of a language in order to support continued, more advanced, training.”

- Not familiar with the change
 - Definition: Respondents indicated that they were not familiar with the standard change or had not heard about it.
 - “This is news to me; I wonder how long it will take to implement this new change throughout SOF.”
 - “I did not know this had changed.”
- None/NA/off topic
 - Definition: Respondents indicated that they had no comment concerning the standard change or made a comment was unrelated.
 - “none standards change”
 - “None”
- Opposing change – General
 - Definition: Respondent made a comment that opposed the standard change but was not specific.
 - “OPIs are more subjective and do not necessarily indicate the students true understanding of the language.”
 - “This is another requirement that does not directly support a teams ability to conduct the SOF core tasks.”
- Not familiar with the OPI
 - Definition: Respondents reported that they were not familiar with the OPI.
 - “I have never taken the Two Skill OPI so I have no idea as to how this compares with the DLPT”
 - “I have not taken the new test so I cannot comment.”
- Not getting paid for OPI or want a financial incentive
 - Definition: Respondents indicated that operators should gain a monetary incentive for doing well on the OPI.
 - “Get the guys paid who do well on the OPI.”
 - “Do I get paid for scoring well on the OPI? Thats what I care about.”
- Skills should be relevant to their job
 - Definition: Respondents commented that the standard should reflect skills relevant to their job.
 - “Doesnt matter what test battery you use, as long as its relevant to our job.”
 - “The test should include those subjects that the soldier will use down range, i.e. military terms, contract negotiation, conversation, etc..”
- Need to match training to new testing format
 - Definition: Respondents indicated that their training was not adequate for the testing requirement or that training should match the OPI.
 - “If this is how they are going to test then this is how they need to teach the info”
 - “I don not have time to do language training as it is. if we change the test i will have to completly retrain my self in my language.”

- Against reading/DLPT
 - Definition: Respondents made a comment that was against testing on reading skills or the DLPT, but did not specifically endorse the OPI.
 - “A reading test is absolutely non-essential, particularly in Pashtu or Farsi.”
 - “The soldiers ability to understand the written portions of the language are a critical component to his ability to communicate in a language. Does he need to read a full page test essay and then pick apart the subtle meaning - probably not. Does he need to be able to read street signs, graffiti, storefront signs, addresses - in Cyrillic/ Persian/ Arabic/ Thai characters - absolutely. That is another area where the DLPT is a failure. It doesn't test the soldier's understand of what is critical for him to know. Should speaking be a part of the test? Yes. But clear guidelines must be given to the evaluator regarding the left and right limits. I might not be able to tell you a verbatim translation of something, but if i can talk around it with words that I know and get my point across, mission accomplished. If I can ask for clarity and then have something explained to me in a way I comprehend - mission accomplished.”

Responses for “Other” problems experienced during OPI testing.^{15,16}

- Technical difficulties
 - Definition: Respondent indicates that they had technical difficulties (e.g., issues with phone or hearing tester) during the OPI.
 - “could not hear the person on the telephone due to audio difficulty”
 - “difficulty hearing on the phone”
- Tester problems
 - Definition: Respondent references problems with the tester during their OPI, including problems with the tester’s attitude or ability to hear their questions.
 - “instructor speaks too softly”
 - “Instructors not knowing their role or what to do during the interview.”
- Different dialect used in field than in test
 - Definition: Respondent indicated that the dialect used during the interview was different than the dialect used during a mission.
 - “Different dialect”
 - “dialect issues”
- Problems with scoring
 - Definition: Respondents indicated that they did not agree with the way the OPI was scored.
 - “Instructor not well qualified to grade”
 - “NOT ACCURATE GRADING SCALE”

¹⁵ Only SOF operators who wrote in “other” problems they experienced during OPI testing received this item.

¹⁶ Some respondents referred to the OPI tester as an “instructor.” These respondents are likely describing problems that occurred during an in-class oral proficiency exam (OPE), which is not an official OPI. Another possibility is that they are describing a face-to-face OPI conducted at DLI where some instructors are testers.

- Structure of the test
 - Definition: Respondents reported problems with the way the OPI was conducted.
 - “telephone conversations are more difficult than face to face”
 - “subjective test”
- Other
 - Definition: Respondents indicated other problems that were not included with previous themes.
 - “Access to testers”
 - “Test began in the wrong language”

Use the space below to provide any specific feedback that you have to issues you experienced while taking the OPI.¹⁷

- Problems with scoring
 - Definition: Respondents commented on the OPI’s scoring system.
 - “the OPI was scewd since it was not fairly graded through the test process certain instructors gave higher marks while other gave lower marks there was no set standart”¹⁸
 - “Instructor didn't seem qualified enough to grade.”
- Telephone/audio problems
 - Definition: Respondents commented on audio quality or technical problems experienced during a telephonic OPI.
 - “The phones were terrible. You could barely hear the tester; they didn't have a volume switch. The tester was uncooperative when asked to speak up or louder.”
 - “The telephone connection made it nearly impossible to understand the individual on the other end of the line. I continually had to ask the tester to repeat themselves due to the poor connection which was interpreted as me not understanding the original question or comment made by the instructor.”
- Should be done face-to-face
 - Definition: Respondents believed that the OPI should be administered in person instead of over the telephone.
 - “telephone conversation was not a good idea for the OPI....it should have been person to person conversation”
 - “[...]We need to copy the environment we will be operating under- which is face to face”
- Process problems
 - Definition: Respondents commented on problems with the OPI process (e.g., how it was administered, encounters during testing)
 - “should be done by computer”

¹⁷ Only SOF operators received this item.

¹⁸ Some respondents referred to the OPI tester as an “instructor.” These respondents are likely describing problems that occurred during an in-class oral proficiency exam (OPE), which is not an official OPI. Another possibility is that they are describing a face-to-face OPI conducted at DLI where some instructors are testers.

- “Most military personnel will answer questions in a short, concise manner. The instructors told me that I should ramble on tangents to display my vocabulary ability. Although, it is possible to train to do this, it presents unique challenges while being evaluated.”
- Speaking and listening are important/Should be part of the DLPT
 - Definition: Respondents believed that speaking and listening are important proficiencies to assess or commented that speaking and listening should be incorporated into the DLPT test process.
 - “It needs to be part of the DLPT test. The DLPT needs to cover all aspects”
 - “should be part of every DLPT taken”
- NA/None/Not Relevant
 - Definition: Respondent made a comment that indicated they had no response or the response was irrelevant to the question.
 - “We did an OPI after our language immersion. There was no test prior to our immersion so no way to see if our language immersion aided us in our ability to communicate in French.”
 - “NA”

Please provide any specific feedback you have related to the OPI.¹⁹

- None/NA/taken too long ago
 - Definition: Respondents indicated that they did not have feedback for the OPI, that the test was taken too long ago to comment, or their response did not apply to item.
 - “None at this time.”
 - “I frankly do not remember much about the OPI.”
- Good gauge of language proficiency/ability to communicate
 - Definition: Respondents believed the OPI was a good measure of speaking proficiency and an individual’s ability to communicate.
 - “It evaluates the Operators ability to effectively hold a conversation in his target language.”
 - “OPI is a great tool to test a person command of a language.”
- Should cover military related topics or be related to the mission
 - Definition: Respondents felt the OPI should cover more topics related to the military or mission-related tasks.
 - “OPIs should be tailored to each MOS - i.e. / special forces should have OPI questions more related to FID and training locals / PSYOPers should have OPI questions more related to asking questions about social atmospherics / CAers should have OPI questions more related to asking questions about standard of life”

¹⁹ Some respondents referred to the OPI tester as an “instructor.” These respondents are likely describing problems that occurred during an in-class oral proficiency exam (OPE), which is not an official OPI. Another possibility is that they are describing a face-to-face OPI conducted at DLI where some instructors are testers.

- “No military scenarios were given at all on the OPI. I was asked to rent a room in Paris France and describe the room and ask questions about its content.”
- Emphasis on the OPI
 - Definition: Respondents indicated that more emphasis should be placed on the OPI during training.
 - “More stress must be placed upon the OPI test. However, in order to do well on an OPI, the soldier MUST RECEIVE a commensurate amount of "language immersion training."”
 - “More emphasis on the OPI.”
- OPI wasn't relevant (wrong modality, etc)
 - Definition: Respondents indicated that the OPI was not relevant to their job. This includes the test being the wrong modality (e.g., speaking instead of reading, etc).
 - “Needs to have more practical, job-related conversations that involve negotiations, commands, etc.”
 - “The Korean language OPI was not related to a North Korean-US military scenario. I cannot speak for War on Terror relevant OPI’s.”
- Need more monetary incentives for OPI
 - Definition: Respondents indicated that there should be a monetary incentive for doing well on the OPI.
 - “Since the OPI doesn't count toward getting paid very few take it.”
 - “need to look at paying operators for their proficiency on the OPI/OPE. This is where we make our money on target.”
- Too subjective
 - Definition: Respondents believed that the OPI was too subjective as a measure of speaking proficiency.
 - “OPI is too subjective. I took the OPI and spoke for 45 minutes on the phone and received a 0+/0+ rating. AFTER 45 MINUTES OF SPEAKING. But scored a 2+/2+ on the DLPT.”
 - “The OPI is subjective to the instructor administering it. I do not agree that it is an accurate assessment of an individuals ability to communicate. The problem is that the instructors are basing the test on a number of things, but most important to them is grammar and pronunciation. If you are able to communicate your thoughts and ideas to your target audience I do not think it is overly important that the individual did not conjugat the verb or some other grammatical error, because the person you are speaking to, will understand what you are trying to say and often times, if you do not know the word or cannot remember it, you can simply ask them. During the OPI, all of this is counted against you.”
- Not effective for reading needs or not good replacement for DLPT
 - Definition: Respondents believed that the OPI was not effective for reading proficiency needs or that it was not a good replacement for the DLPT.
 - “As a PSYOP NCO, reading is a critical language skill. It is obviously not covered by the OPI.”

- “As stated before, I am a proponent for the DLPT 5 as the standard of measure with proper language training at the DLI/university level, so that operators master the language concepts. My belief is that the OPI is a quick fix to get a SF candidate through the SFQC, but he will not retain his language proficiency once he reaches the operational Group. There is also no incentive tied to the OPI, i.e. no extra money. An individual who would test at a DLPT 2/2/2 and receive the \$200/month starting at the school house would be more inclined to maintain his language proficiency.”
- Needs to be done face-to-face
 - Definition: Respondents indicated that the OPI should be done face to face versus on the telephone.
 - “OPI needs to be done face to face and not over the phone. OPI should be general conversation, if you can understand and speak the language you will do fine.”
 - “OPI testers need to be in-person not VTC.”
- Cannot use dialect
 - Definition: Respondents indicated that they could not use a particular dialect while testing on the OPI.
 - “School taught versus native dialects vary greatly, especially in Africa.”
 - “A slang, dialect, or military terminologies OPI should be administered in addition to the MSA OPI. The problem encountered when only being trained in MSA is that the Local Nationals can understand you, but if not training in slang, dialect or military terminologies, it can be difficult to understand the Local Nationals.”
- Not mandatory
 - Definition: Respondents indicated that they did not have to take the OPI.
 - “A waste of my time. Instructor wasn't qualified enough, and I didn't even have to take it in the first place.”
 - “The OPI is currently not mandatory, which is a problem. This should be a part of annual testing [...]”
- Problem with Navy requiring baseline DLPT levels before taking OPI
 - Definition: Respondents commented on the current Navy requirement of scoring at a given level on the DLPT before taking the OPI.
 - “Current Navy requirements are that in order to take the OPI a SOF operator must score baseline payable proficiency on the DLPT. Conversational ability is the most difficult aspect of a language to develop and retain, as well as the most useful in the operational environ. Current testing protocols greatly undervalue verbal communication, in either a human oriented capacity or to qualify for incentives.”